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AN ARTIST'S PROOF.

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BY

ALFRED AUSTIN,

AUTHOR OF 'THE SEASON: A SATIRE,' ETC. ETC.

' Nil nequeat nobis dignam Dis degere vitam.'—LUCRETIVS.

' Nought e'er need balk us of a godlike life.'—AUTHOR'S TRANSLATION.

IN THREE VOLUMES.

VOL. II.

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CHAPTER XII.

A MAN, should young blood still ripple in his veins, must be poorly constituted indeed, if, coming from the noisy conventionalities and tyrannical limitations of a town, he be not half beside himself with childish joy as he gets deeper and deeper into the liberal air, far-off sky, abounding beauty, musical calm, and fragrant freshness of a highly-cultivated, densely-wooded, and yet undulating country. With few only, and those the quiet self-possessing minds who have discovered what it is they want and have utterly renounced what they do not, is this exuberant impression resident. But all alike, save those whose nature came cramped from the womb, or who have taken cruel, cold pains to emasculate it in its career, leap, as leaped the poet's heart

when he beheld a rainbow in the sky, at sight of the Permanent Mother who begot but will survive them.

The two visitors were in magnificent feather. As for Horncastle, he literally frolicked. He, than whom none ever seemed steadier in the shafts of daily work, was more like a colt as yet innocent of the collar. He had come—indeed both had—but for a couple of days; and had he been compelled to stay more, he would certainly have begun to slacken in his joy, and to have hungered for a Blue Book, or the intricate discussion of clauses in Committee. But for the present he was as buoyant as a lad broke loose from school, or a swimmer just struck out from shore. Glad as he said he was to be with Mortimer, he averred he was chiefly glad to be with the swaying wheat, the bright verbenas, the flaunting hollyhocks, the soft west wind, the ring-doves cooing in the woods. He was anything but sentimental about them; that was wholly foreign to his nature. He was glad, merry, glee-some, in them and with them: as little reflective as they, but as free and as elastic. The clog of self-consciousness in pleasure as much as in pain;

which has attached itself in these later days to nearly all men who feel or think at all, never approached or hampered him. He did not know it, but he was essentially an inheritor of the old pagan capacity for joy, simply because it *was* joy : ready to yield himself up to the local god, the genius of the place, to Pelasgic Demeter, to the Arcadian Persephone, to the youngest and jolliest of divinities, Thracian Dionysos, or to the merry-mad Pan of choregraphic Thessaly. It was absolutely necessary, in order that this should be so, that he should not know it. But Mortimer, deeply impressed with the spirit of ancient, as he was more or less infected with the spirit of modern times, knew it, and noticed it as a fact for much reflection.

Bracebridge's enjoyment arose in most part from the sensation that he had temporarily, as he expressed it, 'cut the d—d thing ;' by which words he wished to convey his notion of the life which he was now compelled to lead, and which contrasted so sorely with the habits of his early one. The pretty compact cottage was all very well, and the flowers were not amiss, and the lawn

was certainly dear to his indolence. But it was the stable and the stable-yard, the horses, and the Irish retrievers that made Guy feel most at home.

Might he have a mount? Of course he might. They could not go with him. Mortimer had but two horses, and Horncastle much preferred desultory sauntering about to anything else. He did not mind going alone at all, if he might only be in the saddle. So off he went; and the other two were left to themselves. Mortimer at once opened fire upon the subject upon which his mind and heart were wholly concentrated.

‘I am so glad you have come. Since I saw you in town a great deal has happened, and affairs have now come to a crisis.’

‘What about?’

‘About Isabelle Chesterton, of course.’

‘Have you seen your cousin?’

‘No: nor old Chesterton either. But I have been forced to write to both of them, and have had answers in each case. Now, I want to consult you in the matter.’

‘I shall be delighted to give you the best and

soundest advice in my power. You know I shall only tell you what I think wisest, not what at the moment you may most wish to hear.'

'I know that, or I should not consult you.'

'All right. Let us go and sit on the stile at the end of the orchard, and talk it over quietly there.'

By the time they had reached it, Mortimer had explained how he had been unable again to see Miss Chesterton; how long, and therefore how objectionable, the delay was becoming; how, abandoning the hope of doing anything better, he had written to her father for an interview; how he had been asked to convey his communication by letter; and the reply which he had received from Mrs. Thatchley.

'I cannot show it you, for I tore the beastly thing into pieces as soon as I had read it. You have no notion of the life that woman has made the poor girl lead, and—confound it!—the life she is leading her now, I have no doubt. By Jove! but if I succeed—as I have precious little doubt I shall—in marrying Isabelle, I will reduce that female martinet to order. However, that is what she said. I

wrote off to my cousin at once. Here is a copy of what I sent him.'

Horncastle seated himself comfortably on the stile, and read it in the most careful manner.

'A most excellent letter : most excellent. But I very much question if he will not raise the objections, or objections very similar to those, which you know *I* have always put forward, against your marrying at present. Of course, now that you have done what you have, *I* shall cease to urge reasons which are no longer appropriate, and mere things of the past. But your cousin may not be so delicate.'

'He *does* urge the very objections you anticipated. They are in this letter, which I received this morning. Read it. But then, as you will afterwards see, he does not yet know what you know—that I am virtually engaged.'

Horncastle read the long letter, already transcribed, from Mr. Dyneley, aloud and slowly. Some of the passages he read over again. When he had finished, he handed it back to Mortimer, and said,

'All I can say is that it is not only a very kind letter, but an uncommonly shrewd one. I did

not think that your cousin could throw off such a composition.'

'Neither did I. Clearly he has strong objections to my marrying: but they come too late to be of any use.'

'Are you quite sure of that? But read the answer which you say you wrote this morning, but have not sent.'

Mortimer read it. When he came to the close, Horncastle remained silent.

'Tell me: what do you think of it?'

He looked at his friend, who still paused, but at length replied:

'It is very properly and very handsomely written, no doubt. But I do not think, Mortimer, that it will have all the effect which you expect from it. Now I will tell you what I have not mentioned before, because I did not think it necessary. The very day of the garden-party, at which you first told me seriously that you admired Miss Chesterton, I rode home with your cousin, who offered me a seat in his brougham.'

'Well?'

'Our talk, most of the way, was about you. I

spoke of you, as you know I always speak, most enthusiastically: lauded your abilities, the freshness of your views, your grammatical and logical power, and the effect they would have in the House of Commons. He avowed his unalterable determination, already known to both of us, to get you into the House as soon as possible. At length he alluded to Miss Chesterton, to whom you had that afternoon introduced him.'

'And what did he say?'

'He said that she was a very nice girl, and that you had made some jocose allusion to your marrying her, but that he supposed it meant nothing; and then asked what I thought.'

'Did you tell him?'

'Yes: I said that I believed you really entertained some such intention, but that I did not (as indeed I did not) suppose you had at all made up your mind on the subject. He was glad to hear it, he said; for he thought it monstrous for you to be entertaining ideas of marriage whilst you were so young, and especially when your attention ought to be exclusively directed to other matters. Indeed, he expressed himself pretty much as he expresses

himself in that letter: strongly opposed to your marrying Miss Chesterton or anybody else.'

'Why did you not tell me this before?'

'My dear fellow, I have never seen you but once since, before to-day; and that was in the lobby of the House on your return from Drummington—'

'Confound the place!'

'—When you told me, to my dismay, that you had already engaged yourself to Miss Chesterton. It was no use telling you *then*.'

'Not a bit.'

'Had I really thought that you were going to pledge yourself that Thursday in Alwoodley Chase as you did, I would have made a point of seeing and telling you, in order that your cousin's words might act as a warning in time. Two days after, you went to Drummington; and as soon as I knew that, I felt, in my ignorance of what had occurred, that matters were all safe for the present.'

'I am very glad, after all, you did not see and tell me; or very likely I should not at this moment be engaged to the dearest girl on earth.'

'I don't want to hurt you, Mortimer, but I wish to God you were not. Your cousin's objection is

stronger than you imagine. Read that letter carefully; and you will see that he means all he says.'

'I know he does. But when he hears that I am positively engaged, what can he do?'

'He can still object.'

'He will object in vain.'

Horncastle perceived that his remark 'he can still object,' had been indiscreet, and had only irritated Mortimer, so he answered, quietly—

'I suppose he will. But after all, old boy, there is much good sense in what he says. Success in politics *does* require concentrated devotion.'

'All very well. And suppose I grant his view and yours to be right, still if I have broken my neck, it is no use coming to me with precautions against breaking it.'

'But your cousin may be unwilling to think that your neck *is* broken. He may consider that you are in a fair way of breaking it, but that he yet sees his way to saving you.'

'Then he is very much mistaken.'

'Tell me—if you will—what occurred in the Chase?'

Mortimer told him. But it was necessarily a

picture with the colouring left out. Men do not as a rule talk "spooney" amongst each other; and Mortimer was the last person in the world to talk it. He narrated pretty accurately what each had said. But the looks and the gestures, and the fondness, and the touch more decisive than a thousand utterances, all these were of course omitted.

‘I really do not see that what you have done is final and irretrievable. How long were you together?’

‘Oh, perhaps a quarter of an hour, or rather less.’

‘A quarter of an hour! Surely such a mere moment cannot bind a life.’

‘One minute may; and it is one of those fifteen minutes that binds me.’

‘But you own that you would make—and I certainly think it is your duty to make—the sacrifice of your own feelings, in this instance, in deference to the deep convictions of your benefactor?’

‘At once; with whatever disappointment.’

‘Then it remains only to consider her feelings.’

‘Exactly so. And pray who is to ask her to sacrifice them? I, who evoked them, and who am

to be benefited'—he could not help speaking with a sneer—'benefited by the sacrifice! Surely, Grattan, you are not going to argue in favour of such a degradation?'

'Certainly not. But more honourable means could be devised by which the end could be attained.'

'I do not see them, and I do not desire to see them, though again I assert that, had her feelings not been engaged, I would not now attempt to engage them. It is not only that she is too dear to me, but I trust that I am too honest and clear-headed a man to rejoice in having won her heart, if the probabilities were that it will not beat permanently on my own. I believed the probabilities to amount almost to a certainty that it would so beat, and I believe it still. But if I were now brought to believe otherwise, it is too late to calculate chances. Honour knows nothing of odds.'

'Very true. Nothing could be truer. But tell me—it is a blunt question—'

'Ask it. I know you will neither ask nor say anything but out of regard for me.'

‘Depend upon it. What I would ask is this: Are you quite sure that Miss Chesterton’s feelings are very deeply implicated in what you call your engagement?’

Mortimer did not answer impetuously, or even at once. When he did, he said very quietly :

‘Who is to ask her the question? *I* will, with pleasure, provided I be not expected, in asking it, to imply what would be as false as it would be brutal, namely, that my own are not. I am quite ready to gulp down my own feelings, but not to ask her to gulp down hers in order—well, in order that I may not lose the patronage of my benefactor.’

There was no standing up against such directness as this. Horncastle had felt, many a time before now, that when Mortimer gave full play to his straightforward logic, the most pliant sophistry in the world went down before it like barley before hail. He was not ready with any more supple ingenuity. So his friend went on.

‘Thanks for your well-meant advice, and for your kindness in arguing the matter out with me. It only corroborates, indeed confirms, the view I took at first. There is no room here for compromise.

I must give way, and sacrifice the girl, or my cousin must give way and let me marry her. After all, except for the sake of bringing this out more clearly, our conversation has been really unnecessarily long. I have not a doubt, in my own mind, that when he receives my letter, he will see the necessity for yielding. He will then be the very one to help me through whatever smaller obstacles may remain'

'So you are determined to send your letter as it stands?'

'Yes; it simply states the facts, and puts the case in the truest, and therefore the strongest light. He will give way to a certainty.'

'Very likely he will,' said Horncastle, sliding off the rail of the stile, and speaking in a tone that Mortimer thought ought to have been more cheerful, if the speaker believed his own words. He had been worked up to the very frankest of moods, so he said straight out,—

'I hope, Grattan, you will not be sorry if he does. You speak as though you rather hoped he would not.'

'Not at all, my dear fellow,' answered Horn-

castle, in a sprightly voice : ‘not at all. But I see that marriage, at present, is the very worst thing that could befall you. And so *my* feelings are rather distracted between what I think your interest and what you declare to be your inclination.’

‘And—you forget—my honour.’

‘I have no fear of that. *That* is safe in your own keeping. See : here comes Bracebridge. Does he know anything about this?’

‘Not a word.’

‘Then I would not tell him, if I were you. He is a capital fellow, but a little leaky.’

‘He could not do any harm by mentioning it.’

‘Yes : if your scheme failed, he could. You would not like it talked about.’

‘True : but there will be no failure, you will see. However, there is nothing to be gained by mentioning it ; and I am not so anxious to discuss it further. I shall not say anything.’

‘And you will send the letter?’

‘Yes : to-night.’

The dinner was as good as Mortimer’s special injunctions had commanded it to be ; and the two friends from town did it ample justice. Dessert

was trifled with under the shade of a walnut-tree ; and Burgundy, ever big with talk, carried their unflagging converse far into the twilight. The Drummington expedition was faithfully narrated and productive of much merry laughter : Bracebridge still maintaining that the reports which had started Mortimer off to the west, were in their origin sheer and simple canards ; Horncastle, that there must have been some truth in them, and that the visit would some day bear good fruit. Mortimer, partly perhaps from contagion, never felt in higher spirits or better satisfied. The chief cause of his cheerfulness, however, was probably not only his conviction that his excellent plans were on the very eve of completion, but the fact that he was unconsciously enjoying a pleasure never before tasted—the pleasure arising from having difficulties and from contending with them. In no sense, had his life hitherto been active, and I use the word in the largest possible signification. A diplomatist who never steps from his study further than into a drawing-room, or from a drawing-room further than back again into his study, may lead a very active life. Mortimer was tasting blood for the first time,

and I think that he liked it. He did not know that the shadow of the great change from the contemplative to the active was already threatening him. But it is for me briefly to note it. The Artist could remain passive artist no more, save on the terms of a Renunciation, which he now scarcely seemed willing to accept. The Epicurean doctrines, which were devised by a noble soul of ancient times only in order to teach man how to act with dignity, but which have been construed by the disgust of noble souls of modern ones (as the only means of any longer applying them) into an injunction not to act at all, had been in this their recent but indefensible development, at once Mortimer's guide and protest against what he deemed and often denounced as the undignified scramble of his century. Was the guide to be abandoned? Was the protest to be, at least, suspended? What, now, was to be his end? The easily and surely attainable? Or that which could be attained only with difficulty, and perhaps would not be attained at all? Would he, by consenting to own similar wants, be dragged into similar struggles, with his Time? And in doing so, would

he be fortunate enough to get hold of, and so be saved by the real doctrines of the original Master? Or would he fall back upon his miscomprehension of those doctrines, unfortunately filtered and passed on and known to him and most of us as they are, only through the elegant but demoralizing channels of the lyrical dilettante of an expired republic? Horace, having flung away his shield and fled at Philippi, lived to turn the disaster into metrical joke on the sunny slope of Ustica. Epicurus, harassed at three-score-and-ten by a painful and irremediable illness, remained at his post, splendidly teaching, to the last. Whose doctrines would prevail with Mortimer? That we must wait to see. But already, this August night, it is evident that, though Contemplation is good, Action is not altogether without its charms. He is contending, and therefore—though he knows not why—he is cheerful and elated.

But when, having seen to the final comforts of his guests, he retired to his own bedroom, and saw the big bronzed moon come up through the low mist of the horizon, soberer though not sadder feelings welled up within his breast. Strangely enough,

words which had apparently made no impression at the time, and which had certainly never since recurred to his mind, seemed whispered now almost again into his very ear. When in Alwoodley Chase, it will be remembered, he had asked Isabelle Chesterton how she liked Grattan Horncastle, she had first inquired if she was to speak according to the old bond of frankness; and assured on that point, she had answered, 'Not overmuch.' And, when pressed by Mortimer for her reason, she had confessed herself somewhat perplexed to find a definite one; but eventually she had framed her objection in the words, 'He seems to me to imagine that people—you of course among the number—ought to live for the sole purpose of succeeding.'

Could he deny it? He loved Grattan Horncastle sincerely and steadily. He admired beyond measure the continuous energy of his friend, which seemed to realize Göthe's ideal of "unresting, unhasting." The pluck of the fellow—pluck, too, that was not mere impetuosity, but persistent and as though based on some conclusion—compelled his marvel and coerced his approbation. It was all very well for querulous, good, blundering Guy to

come to him with facts, many of which, though Guy believed them to be such, were probably huge inventions or distortions of the truth, and the rest of which, though to be deprecated, and he trusted not to be continued, were almost the necessary attendants of the commencement of such a wonderful career. Mortimer could never have tolerated them in his own, but he invariably palliated them in Horncastle's conduct. Still that his adventurous associate appeared to regard success with concentrated devotion, and as an end in itself, he could not deny. If he could not deny, could he palliate *that*? And mind, 'you, of course amongst the number,' were part of Isabelle's words. Her charge was not only that Horncastle's own sole purpose was to succeed: she would probably have ignored, or at any rate forgiven him, so much. But her objection to him was that he seemed to want Mortimer also to live for the sole purpose of succeeding.

Had not his arguments this afternoon justified the accuracy of her discernment? If the charge was an imputation, it was an imputation that could not honestly be repudiated. Horncastle certainly

seemed to regard as of little moment whatever stumbling-blocks lay in the path of ambition, and to urge that they be kicked out of the way accordingly. And as Mortimer sat on the window-sill, staring at the ascending moon, the question insidiously and unconsciously entered his mind, Could Horncastle really be so terribly anxious about his political success, except with some at least secondary purpose of forwarding and securing his own? And *was* the purpose secondary? Was it not too deliberate and, like everything else he did or thought, too practical and persistent for that? And was not Grattan really considering his own advance, rather than Isabelle's feelings or Mortimer's honour? Put so nakedly as this, it made him start and recoil. At first he scarce knew what he was asking himself. But when, by letting his thoughts ramble in the moonlight, he had got led into propounding such a suspicion as this, he checked them instantaneously, leaped down from the sill, and beginning to undress, exclaimed—'For shame! The best and kindest fellow that ever lived. Of course, he would like to have me by his side in public life. What so natural? And I would and will, to the best of my

ability, back him through thick and thin. But I am sure, though he may mingle what he thinks our interests, he never dissociates them. *He* does not love Isabelle. He has never felt the touch of her interlacing fingers. He has never looked down upon her closing blue eyes, never held her in his arms, never approached her sweet, pure, and purifying lips. He does not know, except on my cold word, that she loves me at all. It is but reasonable that he should urge what he thinks my cause rather than what he may think hers only. It would be strange were it otherwise. He does it all in pure friendship, I am sure. And when I have once calmed his fears both by marrying her and making my maiden speech, I hope I shall be able to prove that I value it.'

Whereupon he fell asleep, and so remained till the sound of Bracebridge's voice romping with the dog on the lawn woke him to the day. It was spent in driving his friends through the leafy lanes of Woodlandshire, and showing them with evident but tolerable pride the natural beauties and cultivated advantages of a county, to which, though not his native one, his brief residence at Gracewood had

already left him warmly attached. Nothing occurred to interfere with the quiet enjoyment of a perfect country day ; and it closed, like its predecessor, with an al-fresco symposium.

The next morning, Bracebridge was in a fidget to be off. A couple of guineas' work was awaiting him in town.

'It's a beggarly sum,' he said, 'beggarly ! But it's two guineas, and I can't afford to lose a chance, *I* can't. Some fellows have millions of chances in life. Millions. *I*'ve never had one. One ! And what's more—what's more—is, that if I lived for ever, I never should have one.' And—though he firmly believed what he said—he exploded with laughter, in which the two others joined.

'Never. There's my brother—that scoundrel, I call him—well ! they tell me that he's going to marry a rich woman. Yes ! a woman with sixty thousand pounds. Sixty ! One would suppose that no woman—*no* woman—if she hadn't sixty pence—would marry such a scoundrel. Not if she hadn't sixty pence ! And yet she's going to marry him, with sixty thousand pounds. Ah !

some fellows *have* chances. Now, I call that a chance. If *I* had such a chance !' and he broke an egg-shell. 'But I haven't; that's all.'

'And must you really go, old boy?'

'Must, sir! Must. Must go. We don't make two guineas every day. Must.'

'And you, Grattan?'

'Oh, I will stop till to-morrow. I ought to go to town; but I will manage to stay.'

'That's all right.'

When they had seen Bracebridge off, Horncastle asked at once,

'Any letter?'

'Yes.'

'Well! to what effect? I could not make out from your face whether you had heard or not, but thought you had not.'

'Read it,' said Mortimer, handing him the letter, and then walking about the room. 'Aloud.'

'MY DEAR MORTIMER,—It is a thousand pities that you have been so imprudent and impetuous. Delicacy, if not duty, ought to have instructed you to abstain from what you have

done, until you had communicated formally both with Mr. Chesterton and with me.

‘ I do not consider that my kind views and wishes respecting you ought to be thwarted by any rashness on your part. My object in freely giving you all the advantages which I could have given to a son, was to enable you to distinguish yourself. When you have done that, you will be justified in marrying. Hitherto, you have done nothing towards the former; and your thinking of the latter before you have, would lead most people to suspect that you never will.

‘ I, however, do not think so. On the contrary, I am persuaded that you will now set manfully to work to prove the stuff you are made of. There are no obstacles in the way. And should any arise, I will help you to the utmost to overcome them.

‘ I have written frankly, but do not mean, however I may seem, to write harshly. Accept my words in good part, count on my support, and believe me your affectionate cousin,

‘ ROGER DYNELEY.’

‘That’s a nice thing to have to swallow early in the morning,’ said Mortimer.

‘You swallowed it well, and your breakfast on the top of it, at any rate. I really did not think that you had received any letter at all. But it is evidently written in all kindness.’

‘True; but I fear I have become a slave without knowing it. I did not calculate that “kind views and wishes” would involve such severe obligations.’

Horncastle seemed desirous that Mortimer should talk rather than himself. So the former went on.

‘As you say, I ate my breakfast pretty decently, for I am determined to be cool in this matter. I confess that my impulse would prompt me to get rid of the “views” and the obligations at the same time.’

‘That would be simple madness.’

‘Perhaps it would,’ answered Mortimer, with a singularly judicial tone. ‘More than that, it would perhaps be impropriety and ingratitude. Short as is the time since I received this note—I always get my letters as I am dressing—I have quite made up my mind what to do.’

‘ And that is ? ’

‘ To yield to my cousin thus far : To write and say that, since his objection to my marrying arises from the suspicion that my thoughts are bent rather in that direction than in the direction of politics and distinction, I will promise to devote them wholly to the latter for a period of two, or, if he insists, three years ; provided that he will engage, in case I satisfy him, to enable me to marry Isabelle Chesterton at the end of it. I shall so concede all that he demands, and at the same time be in a position at once to behave loyally to her, and obtain the conditional consent of her father.’

Mortimer halted in his walking up and down the room, and looked at Horncastle.

‘ What say you ? ’

‘ You are a very direct and straightforward, but a very capable fellow. What you say has, under the circumstances, my complete approbation.’

‘ I am glad of it.’

‘ My dear Mortimer, I have told you till you must almost be sick of hearing me say it, that I think more highly of your capacities than of any man’s of my acquaintance. And now I declare I

think more of them than ever. I confess I sometimes consider you to be carried away by what you will let me call your excessive long sight, so as not to see very clearly what is lying nearer to you. But now, you talk like the most practical man on earth.'

'And you are satisfied and approve?'

'Completely.'

'Then come into my study, and we will put it on paper.'

They went. And, reading aloud as he went on, Mortimer wrote:—

'MY DEAR COUSIN,—I do not hesitate to express my regret that I have rashly followed my feelings without previous formal consultation with you.

'Yet, having done so, I am bound to those other feelings which the honest, if premature, expression of my own has evoked.

'Still I feel, with you, that what you deem indiscretion on my part ought not to thwart your kind wishes and schemes in my behalf. And, happily, it need not do so.

‘I am quite ready to satisfy you as to my earnest desire, at least, to earn that distinction, which you have a right to expect as the return for your kindness. Once satisfied on that point, you will not, as I understand you, object to my marriage with Miss Chesterton.

‘With this object, I undertake on my part neither to marry nor to trouble you with projects of marriage for two or—should you wish it—for three years, if you will be generous enough to give such an undertaking (to take effect at the end of that period) as will satisfy—not me (I do not require it), but—Mr. Chesterton, and induce him to leave as an open question my future relation with his daughter.

‘I am gratefully and affectionately yours,

‘MORTIMER DYNELEY.’

‘Excellent! I have not a word to alter. By Jove! you do everything well. It is tip-top.’

‘And I may send it?’

‘As soon as ever you like.’

‘He *must* consent to that.’

‘I should think so. And believe me, Mortimer,

if he does, it is the luckiest thing on earth for you that he has raised the objection. You have not yet had sufficient taste of active life—'

'I have had none.'

'Precisely. You have had none ; at least, not sufficient to be safe against being allured from it by the first sweet indulgences of domestic life. If you were to marry to-morrow, I verily believe that Posterity would never hear of you.'

'It never will, in any case.'

'O yes, it will, now. Conceit in one man is honest self-confidence in another. To use your cousin's phrase, you have "stuff" in you—the stuff of which the dead demigods were made. We cannot afford to let you remain dolling at Scyros. Troy requires you.'

'And you are the Ulysses who have discovered me,' said Mortimer, laughing. 'I will back my Isabelle against all the daughters of Lycomedes.'

'And *I* have discovered you. Be it so.'

A shrewd and classical looker-on would have remembered and been tempted to remark, that it was not till Patroclus was hard hit, that Pelides thundered to the war. Grattan was an indifferent

scholar; and Mortimer was too absorbed in the conversation of this morning to recall his condemned suspicions of the by-gone night.

Horncastle continued—

‘As matters now will stand, you will taste how sweet, and prove how noble, a thing it is to be in or striving towards the van of public energy. Having once tasted and proved this, you will never turn back: yet, without turning back, you will be anxious and able—let us still be Homeric—to receive the delayed and then restored sweet *Brisëis* in your Gracewood tent.’

‘Bravo! Grattan! You almost convince me of what I am always pretty ready to believe, that what is happening is for the best.’

‘Of course it is. But for this happy misfortune, you would probably only have added to the long miserable list of Samsons shorn. As things now stand, you are inveigled into battle, for which you were especially designed. And if your lady-love be, as I doubt not, all that you vaunt her, she will not welcome her troubadour any the less because he comes singing from the war.’

Verily, a wonderful fellow! Gifted with little,

if any imagination, he could press into his service the most romantic converse, in order to further a strictly practical purpose.

‘Agreed, then! said Mortimer.’

‘Agreed. And now that you have made my mind easy on this point, I shall follow old Bracebridge up to town. I really ought to go; and only stayed here out of sheer anxiety to hear your cousin’s decision. Now that I see you so rightly-minded on the subject, I can leave you with comfort.’

‘I am sorry you are going.’

‘I will *not* go, unless you promise me that, be your cousin’s answer what it may, you will not write to him or see him again on the subject without talking it over with me. I believe there will be little or nothing to talk over. Still, for safety’s sake, promise me.’

‘I promise.’

‘Good! old boy.’

And Horncastle departed.

CHAPTER XIII.

THE more Mortimer, when left entirely to himself, reflected on what he had done, the more satisfied he became that he had chosen the only course which was consistent at once with right, and with what is vulgarly called expediency. In the consideration of the present unforeseen perplexity, there were three people whose claims had to be entertained, and, if possible, reconciled—his cousin, Miss Chesterton, and himself. It would have been in the highest degree unreasonable, not to permit the man who had so far done everything to place him in the position which he held, to interfere by counsel, at the very least, in a question bearing so directly on his career as that of immediate marriage. It was idle and puerile in the extreme to chafe at the slight control incidental to the

bestowal of worldly means ; and it would be self-willed folly, and by no means dignity, to reject the second in order to get rid of the first. The real question was, was the influence demanded in proportion to the obligation conferred by him, and did it not clash with prior or more potent duties ? The answer must be affirmative. That a man should accompany the gift of a large income with the proviso that it be put to some good purpose, and that purpose fully in harmony with the avowed tastes and recognized capacity of the receiver, was not only defensible, but to be expected. And further, that in the pursuit of such purpose he should have some say to the means employed, so long as he recommended none but such as were strictly honourable, could not be esteemed either rigorous or exacting. Viewing life from, perhaps, a point of larger view than his cousin, Mortimer still believed, despite all Grattan Horncastle's admonitions, that immediate marriage would rather speed than hamper his career. Still, the sacrifice of a year or two to the opposite opinion could not be considered excessive.

Especially when, as in the present case, Miss

Chesterton, who was equally to be considered, was still only in her twentieth year. Many English parents would demand such a delay, simply on the score of her youth. And though Mortimer would have regarded a demand thus solely supported as anything but either wise or reasonable, he or anybody else in his place would probably have had to yield to it, had it been put forward. But the reasons now advanced were of that nature that the delay could not for a moment be held as bearing hard upon Miss Chesterton.

Upon him, the third person to be considered, it perhaps did bear rather severely. To ask a man of six-and-twenty, who is in love, to postpone the accomplishment of his desires for two or three years, is a very different thing from requesting a maiden of nineteen to remain a maiden till she comes to what is commonly called of age. Still, if the claims of the other two were rigidly answered by the arrangement, his own ought not to be too prominently pursued. Supposing that his own original view was the right one, no great injury could be inflicted by the adoption of Mr. Dyneley's. If his own original view were as unwise as Mr. Dyneley

esteemed it, in his cousin's and Horncastle's combined counsel would be safety.

Two days must necessarily elapse before he could hear again from Mr. Dyneley. These were spent in the inauguration of the system which he intended forthwith to pursue. The poets and the philosophic speculators were put back upon placid shelves, and some crabbed documents, printed 'by order of this House,' which Horncastle had brought down with him and left behind, were solemnly opened and laboriously examined. A thick-set, sturdy volume upon Poor Laws was dragged out of an upper chamber, dusted, thumbed, and annotated. The last returns of the Board of Trade were critically conned, and a couple of vigorous pamphlets on the then prevalent question of Protection submitted to severe analysis. As much of a scholar as I have long ago described, thoroughly versed in the construction, and equally fluent in the use, of the French and Italian languages, Mortimer trusted that a steady determination to devote his abilities to the practical political problems of his time, would enable him, within three years (supposing that he shortly got a seat in Parlia-

ment), to prove that he was on the road at least to as much distinction as his cousin or himself had a right to expect. So he worked with a will those two days, and for two more, during which no communication came. On the fifth morning it arrived, and was couched as follows:—

‘MY DEAR MORTIMER,—I had hoped that my last letter would have closed our correspondence on a subject by no means agreeable to me. Your fresh communication only induces me to dread that my latent fears, rather than my expressed hopes, were sound.

‘I consider that you ought to be amply satisfied with my repeated proofs and assurances that I take the greatest interest in you, and that your suggestion of binding me to any specific engagement is, to say the least, unreasonable.

‘They write me word from Northumberland, that the grouse are both plentiful and strong on the wing. I cannot go there myself just at this moment, but there are four men going down for the 12th, and I shall be very glad—indeed, I shall be under considerable obligation—if you will go down

and entertain them. Write and tell me if you will thus far convenience me.

‘ Your affectionate cousin,

‘ ROGER DYNELEY.’

Mortimer's first impulse, on reading this letter, was to throw up the cards and his allowance at once. Oddly enough, he had that very morning—having, contrary to his wont, awoken a couple of hours before his time for rising, and been unable to fall asleep again—been reading in bed that saying of Socrates recorded of him by Xenophon, ‘That the man who receives money buys himself a master, whose commands, however humbling, cannot honestly be rejected.’ But calmer reflection also reminded him that it was quoted by the historian in order to prove the philosopher's contempt for gain, and allowed him to fall back upon the judicial frame of mind in which Horncastle had left him. The letter was disappointing and eminently disagreeable to him. Still, was there anything in it to induce him to believe that all means of ultimately gaining his point were exhausted? And until there were, could he command his own self-respect, or could he even

be justified, if he cravenly yielded? Would it not be better, as indeed it was almost obligatory on him, to lay the real state of the case before Mr. Chesterton, and ask him to be so far satisfied with it as to let his relations with Isabelle remain for the present where they were? Even if the father, egged on by the whispers at his side, made as many difficulties as it was true could, with a little dexterity, be raised, the daughter would be contented with the reasons for delay, and would balk the malice of one parent and the weakness of the other by the passive waiting of a believing love. That matters were not going to be as smooth as he had, at first, sanguinely conceived, became evident. But it had become so by degrees; and he was gradually growing habituated to difficulties. Was there anything more, after all, in the course which events had taken, than a first intimation to him which was sorely needed and could not arrive too soon, that active life was something different from untroubled meditations on the Umbrian Hills, uncontradicted speculations by the Ligurian Sea, ingenious solutions of social problems on Gracewood lawn, or even smooth easy love-making in Alwoodley

Chase? Would he renounce, and be *locuples continente ripâ*—rich within the narrow limits of his own personality? Supposing that the influence of his old existence, enforced by incipient disgust at the distasteful terms of the new one, might provoke him to incline to renunciation, another question had first to be asked and answered—*Could* he renounce? And the sound, heard it seemed so long ago, of ‘Good-by, love!’ followed by that of receding hoofs, drowned all such questioning.

He would ride over at once to Beadon Priory. He had promised Horncastle that he would not write again to his cousin without previous consultation. But he had promised nothing more. And as he could not now write to his cousin again, in any case, until he came to some understanding with Mr. Chesterton, he had better send a line to Grattan to say that he should very likely be in town in a day or two and would call; so that, immediately upon the occurrence of the former event, he could see his friend and devise with him, if necessary, the next step to be taken. So he wrote to Horncastle accordingly. He wrote also to Mr. Chesterton, with the intention, should he fail to see him, of leaving

the note at the Priory. Further delay was quite out of the question.

Mr. Chesterton was not at home. Neither was his sister. Neither was Miss Chesterton, for whom in desperation he took courage to ask. He left his letter and rode away.

This is what he had written :—

‘DEAR MR. CHESTERTON, —I should have sent an earlier reply to Mrs. Thatchley’s note, but for the unavoidable delay caused by my communicating with my cousin.

‘Your disapprobation, indeed almost your displeasure, is expressed at my not having mentioned to you my meeting with your daughter in Alwoodley Chase. Pray do me the justice to remember that, in spite of many attempts, and one formal request to see you, I have never succeeded in doing so since the event to which I believe you to refer. Had I succeeded, I should have informed you not only of that meeting, but of everything that passed during it. I thought it neither necessary nor convenient to do so by letter.

‘Upon that occasion I avowed, what I sought

immediately to convey to you, my affection for your daughter. I have only to repeat the assurance here.

‘In so far as my income—fifteen hundred a year—depends on the continued liberality of my cousin, it can be called, though I do not think justly considered, precarious. Mr. Dyneley has always manifested, and at this moment extends to me, the most remarkable kindness. Indeed he has, in writing, alluded to his intention to increase my income, when my requirements call for such generous intervention.

‘At the same time, it is my duty to inform you that, having made arrangements for my entering Parliament, and wishing that I should for the present devote my attention to this rather than to any other matter, he objects to my marrying just now. Perhaps this his view will coincide with your own as to the age at which you would wish your daughter to leave her home.

‘Regretting that anything should have occurred not quite in accordance with your wishes, I confine myself, therefore, under the circumstances, to relying upon your kindness to allow matters to remain where they are, and to continue towards

me the extension of that welcome and hospitality for which I have so often been pleasurably indebted to you. To the future may be left your formal approbation of a union which I am willing for the present to consider as conditional.

‘With kind regards, I am, dear Mr. Chesterton,

‘Yours very sincerely.

‘MORTIMER DYNELEY.’

On the whole, he was not sorry that he had failed to see Mr. Chesterton to-day. It would have been difficult to say so well orally what he had written and left. He was satisfied with the letter. It explained everything, and asked so little, that the little could not possibly be refused. He should never meet Isabelle in Alwoodley Chase again, it was true; nor anywhere else, for that matter, except under the Medusan stare. But he *should* meet her; and now that so much had passed between them which never could be undone, and the effect of which was doubtless working, and would continue to work in her as it had worked and would continue to work in him, every meeting, however trivial or conventional, and guarded by

all the Gorgon eyes on earth, would have its little something—its hand-pressure, its passing looks, its indefinite allusions, its invisible magnetisms. They might be as mad as they liked about the meeting in Alwoodley Chase, but it had clenched matters, and made him master of the position. He believed firmly in Isabelle; he believed firmly in himself. It would take a good deal of madam's dexterity to undo the effects of that woodland kiss.

His frame of mind had grown rapidly and marvellously combative. He must indeed have risen willingly to the strife, when he could thus brace himself, and keenly though coolly face a three-years' purely strategic campaign. The words of old Ennius seemed ringing in his ears: *Cunctando restituit rem*. He too would wait; and waiting, win.

He had not long to wait for another move on the part of the enemy. Swiftly came a note from Mrs. Thatchley. Thus it ran:

‘DEAR SIR,—My brother agrees with me in thinking your explanation of your position almost as unsatisfactory as your previous conduct. Under

these circumstances, he desires me to convey to you his wish and mine, that all intercourse between us and you should cease.

‘Yours truly,

‘SARAH THATCHLEY.’

This was no flank movement, no feint, no engagement of one wing merely. This was a dead charge at his centre. Would he break and fly? or would he stand fast, even though it were but to fall where he stood?

His first thoughts were anything but strategic. This curt, insolent note raised no emotion of fierce anger such as had been aroused by the former one from the same coarse hand. He felt, simply and instantaneously, a rush of supreme tenderness for the girl with the golden hair and the blue eyes, who had once been so close to him in Alwoodley Chase.

At no previous moment, not even in that moment of proximate pressure, had he been conscious of a tithe the loving gentleness with which he yearned towards her now. As he laid the letter down, and leaned back in his chair with folded arms, he gave

vent to no irrepressible objurgation. He only exclaimed,

‘By Jove! how I love her!’

He seemed to have made a discovery: as though, before this desperate minute, he really had not been aware that Isabelle Chesterton was terribly, was vitally dear to him. He had often confessed to himself, and once or twice to his intimates, that he was sure he should never love any woman thoroughly until she had become his wife. Now, he felt as though she *was* his wife, and it was proposed to take her away from him.

This awoke him from dreamy tenderness to plans of action. What must he do? Not yet quite roused from the semi-somniferous state of affectionate contemplation, his first waking impulse was to ask to be allowed to communicate with Isabelle and tell her all that had occurred. But as his mind gradually opened to other considerations besides those of merely sensitive love, he saw that to make such a request and get it granted would be very like ending the game. He might so acquit himself; but he would as probably lose her. This would never do. If he could contrive nothing

better than this, he must seek and see Grattan Horncastle.

No. For the present he would be his own best counsellor. True, he was now avowedly to himself as deeply and thoroughly in love as man ever yet was. But he was perfectly calm, and resolved as fate to leave no legitimate mechanism untried to arrive at his settled and conscience-sanctioned end. Supposing that fault could be found (and this, under the circumstances, he did not allow) with the meeting in the woods, it was not the blot deemed by Mrs. Thatchley and 'her brother' fatal to his pretensions. It was perfectly clear, from her first letter, that it would have been condoned if his income had been larger and less precarious. And he never doubted that had he been a weak ductile fool, whom Mrs. Thatchley could control, and would therefore prefer, his income would have been considered—and by every honest person *must* have been considered—completely satisfactory. So that, in truth, her personal objection to him, and not either his conduct or his position, was the stumbling-block. Unquestionably, she plausibly supported her objection by the construction put upon his be-

haviour; and he, on the other hand, could not come forward with a rent-roll sufficiently large to make her waive either objection. But it was clear as day that she could point to no genuine obstacle, except her own unwillingness, to his being accepted by parent as well as by child. And he had thus the satisfaction of feeling that he was entirely in the right, and she entirely in the wrong.

But if this were so, and she had become so determined to carry her point that she did not much care to *appear*, and not at all care to *be* right, it was quite certain that she would now stick at nothing to carry it. To behave straightforwardly and beg her to assure, if she would not allow *him* to assure, Miss Chesterton that his love would survive all disasters, would have been to prefer a request ridiculous because certain to be refused. Probably, Isabelle would believe as much—he hoped to Heaven she would!—without being distinctly told it. Still, whether he was ultimately to win or to lose her, it was in the highest degree necessary that she should have some sort of communication from him. But how?

It was not nice. It was most objectionable. But it was unavoidable. He must try old Jeff.

He had a melancholy ride of it. It was the very worst specimen of an August day: hot, dry, cloudy, and dusty. Never had he ridden that road so fast, and never had it seemed so long. Beadon looked very quiet, and the Priory quietest of all. The door of the stable-yard, which was a considerable distance from the house, was half-ajar; and as he approached, a middle-aged groom came and stood and looked out into the road.

‘Is Jeff here?’ Mortimer asked.

‘Jeff Wilki’son, do you mean, sir?’

‘Yes: Mr. Chesterton’s coachman.’

‘Why, sir, he’s left here this three months.’

‘Left! I never knew that.’

‘Left, middle o’ May, sir! Just before I came. I took his place.’

‘Where has he gone? Do you know?’

‘Haven’t an idea, sir! Only he don’t live hereabouts. I’ve heard speak of him as having been here; but that’s all as I know.’

‘And you have his place. You ride out with Miss Chesterton, then?’

‘ Ride with Miss Chesterton, sir ! Have never done so yet : and I ’ve been here, as I say, this three months.’

‘ Very well. I only wanted to see Jeff. But if you can’t tell me anything about—’

‘ Not a word : except that he ain’t in these parts.’

Mortimer turned away his horse’s head, with a sickening sense of unhappy enlightenment. Slowly he had come to see more and more. ‘ Three months ago,’ was the middle of May ; and in the middle of May the roan had cast a shoe, and the last words had been spoken. Instantly upon that event old Jeff had gone. Had he told all, and been pensioned off ? Or had the interview been discovered by other means, and the poor old boy got the sack for preserving silence ? At any rate he had gone. And Mortimer had to ride back to Gracewood with the letter in his pocket undelivered.

The letter need not be transcribed, since it could not meet the eyes of her for whom it was written. But it contained a manly narrative of all that had occurred during the long interval which had elapsed since their last important meeting, with an exact

acknowledgment of the present position ; and concluded with positive but brief assurances that his love would hold good through all bad days, and with a fond avowal that he had in her as in himself unwavering faith. How was he to let her know this now ?

By this time tenderness had abdicated in favour of quiet rage. The groom had said that Miss Chesterton had never ridden since he came. This little shred of liberty, then, had been torn from her. And the poor girl stood exposed to the worst stripes of daily domestic tyranny. By all the Sacred Powers that influenced mankind ! he would—No ! this was nonsense. But what *was* he to do ?

It was quite certain that he could not pass the threshold of Beadon Priory without the consent of its master. The door was pronounced to be closed against him. The London Season was over ; and there would be no chance of accidental meetings on staircase or in garden. He might ride as long and as far as Poltrot de la Mer, and he would be no better for his journeyings. There was but one course for him to pursue. To write another note, shorter and more formal than the one not delivered

but containing similar assurances: to enclose it in a second envelope to Mr. Chesterton, in the hope that he would give it or communicate its contents to his daughter. The domestic rule being such as it was, disguise of hand or any other device would be absurd. He simply said—

‘MY DEAR MISS CHESTERTON,—I cannot obtain your parents’ consent to our union or even, at present, to our meeting. Whether I succeed or fail in ultimately shaking their decision, I shall remain what I now am,

‘Yours,

‘MORTIMER DYNELEY.’

He put it in an open envelope, enclosed in a second to her father, and posted it. The next day he rushed up to town.

As he ascended the stone steps leading to Grattan Horncastle’s chambers in the Temple, he met Guy Bracebridge. The latter was coming down with slow measured tread, and with a face almost as long as the weary staircase. He generally greeted the sight of Mortimer with a convivial exclamation.

Now, he simply stood stock-still, and said—

‘Um!’

‘Um!’ said Mortimer. ‘A pretty welcome. What’s the matter, old boy?’

‘Um!’ said Bracebridge again. ‘Matter! What’s the matter, you ask. Matter! Why, that’s the matter:’ holding out what was evidently a writ. ‘I knew it would come to this. Knew it. Why, of course I knew it.’

‘What is it all about?’ asked Mortimer, taking the extended document from his friend’s hand.

‘*You* haven’t got one then?’

‘No. Why should *I* have one?’

‘You precious soon will. Soon. Don’t you see that it’s a writ against Horncastle, you, and me, for the rent of his chambers.

‘What a shame! This is the very first I have heard of it.’

‘Yes: because you don’t live in the Temple. You live in the country. These scoundrels’ (he only meant the attorneys for the Inns of Court), ‘these scoundrels don’t know of your rooms in London, or you’d have had one like this before now, I can tell you. Before now. But they don’t.

Or you'd have had it. They know where *I* live. Everybody knows where *I* live. And you see, this is the result: the result.'

'But just wait a moment. I want particularly to see Horncastle.'

'See him. Much chance you have of seeing him. You may suppose *I* want to see him. I've been up this staircase two dozen times at least: two dozen. Ay, three dozen: three. There. But I haven't seen him, and I know I shan't see him. I know that.'

'Then lend me a pencil. I must either see him or put a note through his door. My card will do. You have a pencil. All right. I'll be down in a second.'

Mortimer ran up, and knocked, kicked, and shouted vigorously, but in vain. He slipped the card through, and descended.

'I told you so. Told you.'

'Never mind,' said Mortimer; 'there is no occasion for you to be down. He will pay his rent, you may be sure, though I have no doubt he has been hard up for it. And, if the worst come to the worst, I will pay it. It shall not cost *you* anything.'

‘It’s not the money,’ answered Guy, looking more dismal than ever. ‘It’s not the money; because I haven’t got that—haven’t got it! unless they sell me up; and they wouldn’t get it, even then. No! not then. You’ll have to pay it. Of course you’ll have to pay it. I can’t, or I would—my share, at least—my share!’

‘You shall not pay a penny.’

‘I know that. But is it any less a shame? Somebody must pay it; and that’s you. Somebody! But do you think it’s nothing for me to have a writ out against me?’

‘But my name’s in it, too, it seems, though I certainly have not received any intimation of it.’

‘*Your* name in it!’ exclaimed Bracebridge, with a touch of ludicrous scorn, as though the drift of his remarks was too clear to require any further explanation. ‘Your name in it! What’s that?’

‘It is perfectly evident that this is nothing but pressure put upon Horncastle through you. They choose you because you are at hand. Do you suppose they have pressed him hard already?’

‘Hard! They can’t get to see him, any more than I can. It’s for the rent of the entire year—eighty pounds. Eighty!’

‘Well, *I* will see him, and get it settled somehow. You shall hear nothing further of it.’

‘Nothing further! There is nothing further to hear. *I* can’t pay it. There have been a good many times I could not pay; but I never had a writ out against me before.’

‘But, as I tell you, that is my case also. But though it is annoying, I do not much mind.’

‘Mind! I should think you did not mind. If I were you, I shouldn’t mind. You can pay it, you can. Everybody knows you can pay it—everybody! Now, everybody knows I can’t pay it. There’s that scoundrel, my brother, whose name’s on the back of so many bills that I have never been able to raise a shilling in my life. Not a shilling! And now that I am just beginning to shake him off, *this* comes. This! Why, I’ve just submitted a proposal to an office for a couple of hundred pounds on a policy of assurance on my life. Got my life accepted,—everything all but settled. Everything! And then this comes. They’ll

hear there's a writ out against me. Of course they'll hear it.'

'Not they,'

'Won't they, though? I ought to know something about those things. Something! They'll hear of this, and I shall hear no more of my policy, except that it's refused. Refused, simply! And I've spent just seven pounds fifteen in medical certificate, and that sort of thing. Seven pounds fifteen thrown away, sir!—thrown away. Seven pounds fifteen!'

'Well, don't do anything, and I will promise that it shall be all right. I'll drop you a line about it.'

'I knew how it would be—knew it! Horncastle's a devilish clever fellow,' &c. &c. And Guy went on wailing and prophesying as long as ever he could get Mortimer to listen.

That afternoon, when Mortimer was in his own rooms in the west, he received a note by messenger from Horncastle, praying him to be at the Temple at nine o'clock. He went, and was admitted and received by Grattan, with a countenance more calmly confident, if possible, even than usual. As

he entered the disorderly apartment, his eye fell on an open document on the table, which was on the face of it a receipt from the Honourable Society. He took it up uncereemoniously.

‘I thought I should have had to pay this, after what I heard this morning.’

‘From whom? Oh, from Bracebridge, I suppose?’

‘Yes; he was in a terrible way about it.’

‘Poor Bracebridge! He has no tact, and no patience. He has written me a foolish, angry note. These fellows have behaved very badly. Some of the Benchers don’t like me, partly, perhaps, because I have succeeded, and partly, perhaps, for my politics. However, they might have waited. At any rate it’s paid.’

‘But I wish you had spoken to me, rather than have allowed a writ to be out. Bracebridge says it will injure him, and I am sure it will injure you.’

‘Oh, not much. It could not be helped. I did not like to bother you. You have done quite enough. You remember that bill you accepted. It was for three months. I want it renewed for three more. It will be all right when it falls due.

I cannot conveniently meet it just at this time ; and I was determined that you should not be troubled.'

'Very well. I am glad to be of use to you : but'—and he laughed—'I am more than willing that you should meet your own engagements.'

'Quite so. But now, tell me : what news ?'

'On the whole, very bad. In answer to the letter which I sent my cousin, the day you left me, I received a decided refusal on his part to promise or do anything at all at present. He sticks to his original position.'

'I am not in the least surprised. I have no doubt that he does not think you are in earnest ; and he wishes to show you that *he* is. Was the letter kind ?'

'Yes : but absolute.'

'What have you done since ? Not written again ? You promised you would not.'

'So, of course, have not done so. No. I tried to see Mr. Chesterton ; and failing in that, I sent him a letter, frankly stating my cousin's objections to my marrying at present, and begging him to allow his consent to my future union with his daughter to be conditional on my success and posi-

tion at the end of two or perhaps three years. This is the answer I received : " My brother agrees with me in thinking your explanation of your position almost as unsatisfactory as your previous conduct. Under these circumstances, he desires me to convey to you his wish and mine that all intercourse between us and you should cease." There's for you.'

Horncastle pulled a face but remained silent. The reading aloud of the letter, however, had re-excited all Mortimer's rage.

' Confound it ! ' he exclaimed. ' Where's the use ? I declare I think there is nothing more to be done beyond sending this insolent note to my cousin, and telling him frankly that, if he has not sufficient affection for and faith in me to get me out of this predicament, I have not sufficient faith in him to accept his money any longer.'

' Bah ! bah ! bah ! my dear fellow ! What are you talking about ? I think you have lost your head. And I can tell you you never wanted it all, more than you want it at present. Awhile since, you were inclined to forget everything but Miss Chesterton's feelings. Now, you seem inclined to

remember everything except them. Your honour too, by the way. You talked largely of that. You propose to imperil it now. It shall be no fault of mine if you do not give equal attention to all the considerations: both those you once urged, and those you urge now. Let us be calm.'

'All right, old boy. I am quiet again.'

'Let us examine the position. What have you done since receiving the note which you have just read? Nothing, I suppose.'

'Nothing effectual. I have failed to see or communicate with Miss Chesterton, but have found out that the old groom who was with us the last time I saw her—the time, you know—has left; and I strongly suspect, has been sacked for supposed complicity.'

'Oh, you don't know that;' said Horncastle, hastily, and turning to open still farther the window that looked into the Temple gardens.

'At any rate, he has gone; and he went, I find, immediately after the last interview in Alwoodley Chase.'

'And that is all?'

'Nearly. Before coming up to town, I wrote

three lines to Miss Chesterton, enclosed in another envelope addressed to her father, informing her of the present difficulties, but assuring her of my present and future fidelity.' Horncastle's face vividly brightened. 'Now you know all.'

'And you were talking just now of quarrelling with your cousin, if he did not remove your difficulties at once! Why, your honour is more than ever—is now indeed irretrievably—pledged to Miss Chesterton. You cannot abandon her.'

'I do not wish.'

'You know how, at first, in the frankness of friendship, I begged you not think of her, but to turn your mind to other matters. I begged in vain. To my surprise and anxiety, there suddenly occurred the meeting in Alwoodley Chase. When then you spoke of your love for her, I took the liberty of asking how far you thought her feelings were engaged, and if it was too late to retrace your steps. My pleading and suggestions were disregarded. You said it was too late. Perhaps you were right. But were you right or wrong, one thing is certain: it is too late to go back *now*. The girl who, after one brief meeting, might pos-

sibly not be so desperately in love but that a month or two would cure her passion, will be in a very different mood after three months of anxious waiting ending in an assurance that they have been spent by you in combating difficulties, and that, though they have not yet been conquered, you love her truly still, and will stick to her to the last. If she does not now love you with all her nature, she is not worth her salt.'

Rapidly and earnestly as these words were spoken, Horncastle never for a second took his eyes off Mortimer's countenance, but watched the effect they were making as they were uttered. They could not possibly fail to hit their mark. Mortimer warmed along with them; and his hopes rose with his courage.

'And you think she will stick to me?'

'Unquestionably, if you stand by her. But then your tower of strength is your cousin. Nothing must induce you to quarrel with him.'

'It is mighty hard to have to put up with all these repulses and all this dictation.'

'Not so hard as to find yourself penniless and unloved; or—worse—loved and loving to very little

purpose. The girl on your side may be considered a set-off against the parents, or one of them, on the other. In your favour—and after all it is the great point—is your position, your start, your income; in a word, your close alliance with Mr. Dyneley.’

‘But don’t you think he is behaving badly?’

‘He is behaving firmly: obstinately, if you like. But upon my word, even I—who think so much of you—am not sure that he is not behaving wisely, and in your true interest. If you ultimately marry Miss Chesterton, I shall then be sure that he was right. And I see no reason why you should not: in time, I mean. But hurry will be fatal.’

‘If I could only see her.’

‘You are sure to see her some time.’

‘But you hear they have forbidden me to enter the house. Indeed I suppose if I met them to-morrow, they would not speak to me.’

‘But you would be a great fool, supposing the opportunity favourable, if you did not speak to them, or to her at least. And then they have not cut *me*. And I will not only speak to her when I see her, but I will do my very best to meet her

somewhere or other (one can easily discover where they visit), and let her know how firm you are in your fondness for her.'

'Will you, though? By Jove! I never thought of that. I think *you* are my tower of strength, Grattan. Indeed, under the circumstances, and after the brutal way in which they have behaved, I should feel quite justified in giving you a letter for her.'

'Of course. However, don't let your thoughts run upon that just now. It will, probably, be some little time before I see her. And you ought, rather, to make up your mind to agree to the position that, for the nonce, your cousin thinks desirable.'

'He asks me, at the end of his last letter, to go to Northumberland to shoot, and entertain some people in his absence. He cannot go himself, just now.'

'The very thing. You go, by all means. It will be the very best proof that you can give that you are not vexed with him, but are anxious to do all in your power to please him. You can do no good in the south just at present.'

‘True; but it will be desperately tiresome, and I am in anything but the humour for going. Still, it will certainly humour him. He says I shall quite put him under an obligation by going.’

‘Then you must go, and at once.’

‘Will *you* come with me?’

‘Eh! my dear fellow! I wish I could. But it is impossible. I cannot leave this. It requires all my wit and energy to keep matters straight. I thoroughly enjoy it, but I cannot afford to leave hold of the helm for a day. No! Go you, and good luck with you.’

‘But I must let my cousin know the result of his last letter. I shall certainly send him this note of Mrs. Thatchley’s.’

‘I would not, if I were you. I would do nothing more at present, but drop a line to say that, as he seems to wish you very much to go to Northumberland, you will go.’

‘There can be no harm in letting him see the position in which he has placed me by his refusal to settle on me at once what he declares he will always continue to give. Indeed, I tell you frankly,

I still entertain the strongest hopes that, when he reads this shameful communication, he will see the necessity of interfering in my favour, or of doing something.'

'Very well, send it, if you are resolved. I do not see that you can do any positive mischief by sending it, though I think it would be better to keep it for a little, and show it him when matters have got a little bit quieter. Anyhow, do not accompany it with any further demand, much less with the most distant intimation of threat.'

'Of course not. Why, you shall see what I write. Give me paper. Now for it.' He read aloud as he wrote,

'MY DEAR COUSIN,—I submit the enclosed to your kind and impartial consideration.

'As you seem particularly to wish me to go to Sleuthmere, I will start to-morrow, and will do my best to make up to your guests for your absence. I hope we shall soon have you among us.

'For the rest, confident of the interest you take

in my career, I accept your counsel, and trust, before very long, to dispel all your fears.

‘Yours affectionately,

‘MORTIMER DYNELEY.’

‘Very sensible indeed. That will do, bravely. Now off to the hills! Make a good bag, and send as much of it here as you like. Drop me a line, if you have any news. I shall be sure to be in or about town when you return. Good-by, old boy!’

‘Good-by. I am rather down.’

‘A thing I never was in my life, and you will not be long. Good-by!’

CHAPTER XIV.

WERE a friend of mine to come to me with a dolorous face, and confess that a disaster, long contemplated as possible, had culminated in catastrophe, I should put a gun upon his shoulder, and send him off to the breezy hills. The mere killing of birds is not in itself a very sentimental pursuit; and the amount of exertion required to come upon them, and of not unfrequent delay in coming upon them at all, is sufficient to give a new direction to a mind whose recent occupation is gone.

But to the man whose schemes not only have not ended in disaster, but require nothing more than patience and longanimity for them to end successfully, eight or nine hours a-day on the moors are perhaps rather trying. Not having cause to set aside once and for ever the plans and meditations which have so long been his chief society, he is but too much inclined to break the monotony of his

moorland tramping, especially when coveys are either wild or wayward, with a return to the mental friends whom habit has made necessary, if not dear to him.

So was it with Mortimer. Determined as he was to make the most of the moors, both as a distraction to his mind and as ministers to his health, he did not succeed in banishing the reflections which had been nurtured in the south. He really had had enough of them, and made no slight effort to put them away; but the fact is, he felt humiliated, though in what way he could with difficulty describe to himself. True, he had not altogether succeeded; and want of success is sufficient mortification. But then he could not be said to have failed; and complete failure is not of itself enough to cause a sense of humiliation. Blame must accompany it. Now he could not see where he had erred; and he had no occasion for supposing that he was anything more than temporarily foiled.

But the amount of damage and hurt which we suffer in our tumbles has to be measured by the height from which we have fallen. Judged by the ordinary standard of failure, Mortimer could not

be said to be lying very low ; but unfortunately for his ease, he had long been standing on such a tremendously high mental pinnacle, that the mere consideration of his present whereabouts gives no criterion of the extent of his debasement. Many of us fall to the ground, and pick ourselves up again, not very much worse for the stumble and its consequences. Vulcan fell no farther, and broke his leg, and has been limping ever since ; but then Vulcan fell from heaven. And therein lies the whole difference.

Not more than eighteen months ago, Mortimer Dyneley had surveyed the world and its vicissitudes from Gracewood Cottage, more as a picturesque but overcrowded panorama with which he had nothing to do, than as a never-stationary conflict of interests with which his own were inextricably commingled ; and when, a little later, so much sympathy with its strife as is implied by a movement of compassion for an ill-done-to maiden who had blue eyes and a soft voice, induced him to step across the border-line which divided the world's vulgar scrimmage and his superior indifference, he meant to do nothing more than just to interfere for an instant,

in order to stop a wrong-doing which peculiarly interested him, and then to step back again into philosophic isolation. Such a godlike intervention upon his part would only leave him still more alien from the scrambling crew of humanity than ever.

He stepped across; and he very soon found that these despicable mortals can make a good, stout fight of it to hold their own, even against such divinities as himself. Homeric examples might have prompted him, in finding that strife has its irregular ebb and flow, to envelope himself in a cloud and disappear; but not being quite so divine as he had imagined himself, he did not like confessing to so much defeat as is implied by a precipitate but prudent retreat. He would fight on; and having gained the one solitary point for which he was contending, he would then retire, and have no more of war. But in order to gain this one point, it soon became evident that it was absolutely necessary to gain another. They were such tough and terrible combatants, these tyrants against whom he had come to do stanch battle, that he could protect their victim only by withdrawing her entirely from their

clutches. This then also he must do. In retiring across the border-line, he must take her with him. Once safe with her, his side the limit, nothing should drag him again into a free fight where such hard blows were struck, and such ugly contusions received.

But the nearer he got back home, the stouter grew the resistance; and just as the day seemed going desperately against him, there came a most opportune but not at all divine ally, offering immediate service. At such a moment, a friend even from the enemy's camp could not be rejected. The daughters of men no longer mate with the immortals. They—or their parents for them—prefer Members of Parliament; and a seat in the Commons' House offered itself as a means of more certainly obtaining the disputed maiden.

But allies, especially when useful and sorely needed, usually make their own terms, and have something to say to the conduct of the war; and surveying now, during the suspension of hostilities, the position into which his original divine ardour had dragged him, he found himself in the very thick of contending forces, and about as far from

his own beautiful Secluded Land as was well possible.

This it was that chafed him. His ideas and reality were in direct issue. He had never for a moment consciously intended to pledge himself so deep, and put himself in such commonplace predicaments as surrounded him now. What better was he than his neighbours? Indeed, was he not a good deal worse? Their theories were in perfect harmony with facts; or rather, perhaps, possessed of no theories, they found in facts nothing to annoy or perplex them. He, on the other hand, had some very splendid theories about the dignity of human nature; the worth of lofty and impersonal aims; the virtue of renunciation; the obligation to found contentment on moderate desires; the vulgarity and vice of turning the world into a cockpit; the imperishable value of self-cultivation; the unpurchasable price of calm grace, and the crowning glory of artistic harmony. These were his theories; and how did the facts correspond with them? The question was enough to make a philosophic mind very angry indeed.

But quite in opposition to the story of the petu-

lant sage who, on being answered that the facts were against him, replied that it was so much the worse for the facts ; I have noticed that, when it comes to a conflict, it is generally so much the worse for the theories. So that, by degrees, as the days and nights slipped away, Mortimer went through the following stages of mental metamorphosis. At first, he was stronger than ever in favour of the splendid philosophic theories, and was intensely angry and disgusted with the facts. Then he began to think that the facts would, however, soon cease to be facts, and the theories would require their old undisputed supremacy. Next, he was inclined to allow that, as the facts were very obstinate, the theories might be modified just a little. Rapidly upon that compromising frame of mind, followed another, in which he thought the theories might be allowed to lie dormant for a time. And finally, theories lying dormant, he came to the conclusion that facts were facts, and must be dealt with. From this it was an easy stage to confessing that being angry with them was a very sorry and stupid mode of treatment.

Until, at last, a month having slipped away, a more healthy tone took possession of him. His cousin had written simply to thank him for going to Sleuthmere, but did not himself yet offer to come down. The sportsmen cared not a fig whether he stayed away or not. The game was still abundant, the cellar still full, and Mortimer most attentive. But the latter had resolved not to prolong his sojourn beyond six weeks, and they were rapidly drawing to a close. Their conclusion left him a wiser and calmer man than their commencement found him.

It left him not only wiser and calmer. It left him happier and better equipped. What was there unworthy or ignoble in a pure, manly love for a girl deserving, if ever girl was, of the bravest man's bravest affection? If nothing unworthy in it, what was there undignified or humiliating in grappling with the difficulties which attended it? What violation, pray, of the highest principles, in accepting the alliance of the means best calculated to counteract the difficulties? Time was an element in every calculation; and he could no more expect to work out his in a day than any other slayer of

lions. He was right glad he had come down here. The six weeks had done him all the good in the world. He was in splendid health, and again in good spirits. He recalled Horncastle's parting words, that he would not be 'down' very long. Horncastle had promised to see Isabelle, and explain to her whatever might yet want explanation. Perhaps he had already seen her. And in any case, she could not but be pretty well aware of the complexion at least of what had happened. She must be acquainted with the rough outlines, and thoroughly understand that his fidelity was as unshaken as her parents' contumacy was indefensible. In the breaking away for a time of all his other ideas, one idea remained firm, which was, indeed, growing stronger as time sped by. He thought of Isabelle manfully and bravely now ; but he thought of her with a love that was always tender, and occasionally savage. He would fight unflinchingly through those two or three years. She should animate his endeavours ; she should ennoble his efforts. It was the motive, not the means, that characterized a struggle. His would be no vulgar scrimmage. His would be steady, straightforward

progress, with the beautiful love-lit Pharos at the end. The artist would co-operate with the lover. He had dreamed too much. He was acting now. Alwoodley Chase could be recalled without regret.

He wrote to acquaint both his cousin, Horncastle, and Bracebridge of his intended return. He trusted that he should hear something from the parliamentary agents of a probable vacancy. It was a little early in the season yet for that ; but old fellows generally dropped off in the winter months. November was usually a bad time for them. Early as it yet was, however—only just the middle of September—it would be well to be not too far from town. He would spend a short time in London, and then go down to Gracewood. During the recess, Horncastle would probably find time at any rate to run backwards and forwards, if not to stay. And proximity to Beadon, if discreetly used, would ere long give him every opportunity of letting his darling know, orally or at least ocularly, that he was as much her own as when she had buried her sweet face in his bosom, and he had wound his stalwart arm round her inclining form.

The recollection of that scene was a dangerous luxury ; but it was too dear and consoling not to be occasionally indulged in.

London, detestable in July and August, begins to be not altogether unpleasant in September. To Mortimer's eyes, fresh from the brown and solitary hills, it looked sunny without being hot, and cheerful without being crowded. He had had a long journey, but did not feel in the least fatigued. It was about four in the afternoon as he was driven, with his luggage, gun-case, and big hamper of game, through the, to him, now pleasant streets to his rooms. He would have a good wash, a complete change of things, an idle stroll, and then a comfortable dinner. He should probably come upon some one in his walk who would be glad to meet a companion, freshly arrived from the country. If not too tired after dinner, he would hunt up Horncastle. He paid the cabman liberally, received a most smiling welcome from the hand-maiden, and found his rooms in admirable order. On the table, of course, were letters. There was one from his cousin. He gave it precedence. As he opened it, a cheque dropped out. It was the

half-yearly one ; so he did not unfold it, but read the following accompanying note.

‘MY DEAR MORTIMER,—Many thanks for your extreme kindness in so admirably representing me at Sleuthmere.

‘I enclose a cheque for a thousand pounds for the half-year ; I intend your income in future to consist of twice that amount, and have given orders that a settlement to that effect should now be drawn up according to your wishes—’

‘By Jove ! here’s luck !’

‘— I trust that what has occurred will make no difference between us ; as you will yet see, it was all for the best.

‘Write to me, Poste Restante, Coblenz.

‘Your affectionate cousin,

‘ROGER DYNELEY.’

‘Where the deuce is he off to now ? What a singular old boy ! However, he may travel far and wide, if he chooses, as long as he behaves like the trump he shows himself at present. I wonder what has worked the change.’

The other letters were unimportant. And still expressing aloud his joy at the announcement which terminated his anxieties and brought him close to the accomplishment of his wishes, he commenced undressing.

After a bath and the pleasant sensation of clean linen, he was in better spirits and better humour with himself than ever. He seemed to see still more clearly the happy revolution which the last three-quarters of an hour had worked in his position. He had brushed his hair to his complete satisfaction, had just finished tying his neckerchief most deftly, and was ensconcing himself in the most perfect of white waistcoats, when somebody came noisily rushing up the staircase, knocked boisterously at the outer door, and entered rapidly with a loud—

‘Well, old boy, where are you? and how are you?’ It was Guy Bracebridge.

‘Famous, my dear fellow! How are you? Delighted to see you!’ and he pulled his watch-chain through the topmost button-hole but one of the satisfactorily fitting vest. He was still in his shirt-sleeves.

‘Right as the mail!’ said Bracebridge, ‘for a

poor devil like me. But what a close fellow you are ! ’

‘ How ? ’ asked Mortimer.

‘ You never told me your cousin was going to get married.’

‘ Neither is he, that I know of.’

‘ But he *is* married.’

‘ Married ! Nonsense.’

‘ Nonsense, or no nonsense, here it is.’ And Bracebridge proceeded to drag a folded newspaper out of his pocket.

‘ Pooh ! To whom ? ’

‘ To—to—here it is. To—er—Isabelle, only daughter of Christopher Chesterton, of—’

The sentence remained unfinished. Mortimer dashed at the paper, fixed his eyes on the page, and then blankly on Bracebridge.

‘ God help me, Guy, old boy ! It’s all over ! ’

And there he stood, smitten right into the very heart, pale, impotent, and speechless.

CHAPTER XV.

‘DON’T, Guy! don’t!’ he gasped. ‘I’ll tell you—all—all about it—presently.’

He passed his hand over his forehead, which had broken out into a visible cold sweat. Then, in a strange semi-mechanical fashion, he groped for a cigar, lit it, pulled at it violently, and sank into an easy chair. Then he leaped up quickly, smacked and licked his hot dry lips, flung away the cigar, and exclaimed—

‘Good God! Guy! how shall I tell you? Try to follow me. I dare say I shall be a little unintelligible.’

He was intelligible enough, Heaven knows, in the awful outline of his story. So terse, so abrupt, so rapid, that Bracebridge sickened at the unnatural bare story.

‘Now you know it!’ he said, savagely, at the end, almost as if Guy were the offender.

Guy stood stone-mute. He was not a sentimentalist, and felt tenderly perhaps towards no one. To behave loyally was his one solitary supreme conviction and impulse. To do to others better than he had ever been done by, or ever hoped to be done by ; to be treated scurvily by fate, yet never to decide a doubtful question in his own favour ; to say a thing and do it, no matter how sorely difficult the doing of it might prove : this was his morality and sentiment, and he troubled himself about no other. He had not found men much straightfowarder than fortune. It seemed to him as if both had been in league to trip him up all his life. One fellow, however, had never made him big promises, and when looked to turned away, but had ever done him what little services had been asked for : and this fellow was Mortimer Dyncley. Mortimer had never once put himself to a moment's inconvenience for Bracebridge, for the simple reason that he had never been asked. Indeed, if anything, he felt rather under an obligation to his amusing friend. The lending of small sums, which were always rigorously and punctually repaid, had been a source of quiet laughter to him ; but whether or not Guy

had been more inconvenienced than Mortimer had been inconvenienced, certain it is that the former had come to regard the latter as the 'truest' man of his acquaintance, and cared for him accordingly. So that without an atom of what is usually termed sentiment entering into the feeling, Bracebridge would have placed himself by Mortimer Dyneley's side at the first shadow of difficulty, and stood there immovable till it had blown over or covered them both. The days of chivalry are dead, if you like; and in these slippery times, he who lives without fear must be somewhat short of intelligence. But there are a few among us who, with no swords at their side, still manage to live without reproach.

The first words that Bracebridge said when he did speak, were—

‘Dine with me at my club to-day, old boy?’

In all the going down of youthful splendour, one thing he had religiously saved from the wreck. He had let everything else sink out of sight; but he had clutched at his club, and stuck to that. As long as that remained of former greatness, he was not altogether *mutatus ab illo Hectore*. Something of the swell clung to him still.

At another time Mortimer would have remembered that dining with his friend at his club meant expense. Bracebridge had never asked him before, and indeed had never asked anybody for the last three years. He did so now, simply because it was the best thing, and indeed the only thing that occurred to him under the circumstances. Mortimer answered—

‘Very well:’ and began putting on his coat.

This done, he sat down, unfolded the thousand pound cheque, wrote across it in a large legible hand, ‘Dishonoured,’ and threw it across the table to his companion.

‘Just address an envelope for me, and put that inside. Roger Dyneley, Poste Restante, Coblenz.’

Bracebridge knew well enough what he was doing, but did it; but as he was closing the envelope, he paused and looked up.

‘Is there no other way out?’

Only to that soul of honour would Mortimer have deigned the answering question—

‘Is there?’

‘None,’ said Bracebridge, and closed the letter.

‘Now let us go. I am hungry.’

I almost fear *that* was not true.

They walked down St. James's Street, arm-in-arm; and as they entered the club, Mortimer slipped the letter into the box without a word. The dinner was not bad, but at any other time would have provoked from so difficult a palate as the guest's some sort of challenge. Now he ate without comment whatever came. To this Bracebridge had no objection. But when, both during and after dinner, he filled and emptied glass after glass, evidently in a purely mechanical way—neither hardly uttering a word—Bracebridge quietly interfered with—

‘Now, we will go. To your rooms, if you like.’

‘All right: I am ready.’

Once there, the pent-up talk, that must make its way at last, commenced. What had been omitted or but rapidly touched on in the narrative before dinner, was now told or explained. In about half-an-hour, Bracebridge knew as much as Mortimer himself. In his remarks, when the story was concluded, he followed his friend's example in abstaining from all comment upon her who was once Miss Chesterton. He made free use of his favourite word

‘scoundrel’ in speaking of him who was now her husband ; and he left it evident, though he did not say plainly, that he did not like the advice which Horncastle had given throughout the transaction. He was more eloquent than ever upon the Drummington bubble, and was quite certain that the talk of Gotthupp’s resignation was a downright lie, known as such to old Dyneley, and started if not by him—well, by whom? Not a word was said by either as to the future, though each must have been consciously aware that it would soon become a pressing question.

Mortimer was at last left alone to his own bitter reflections ; Bracebridge promising to call on the following morning. All the thinking in the world could evolve no atom of comfort. Every morsel of ground upon which for eighteen months he had been standing and promising himself to build, had broken away, and was clean gone for ever. There was not so much as a single fragment of foothold left. His schemes had been so deftly designed, and had so completely corroborated one the other, that they fell to pieces simultaneously. Isabelle had gone. His cousin had gone. His income had gone. His

career had gone. He was a poor, unfriended, unloved pauper.

Too utterly dumfounded and bewildered to be what is ordinarily termed miserable, he went to bed and, wearied with his journey, positively fell asleep almost as soon as his head touched the pillow. But he awoke in about an hour-and-a-half, and of course slept no more. He lay very quiet, dismally wondering who had been treacherous and who not. That he had been intentionally sent to Drummington in order that he might not be at the Richmond dinner, he could not well doubt. That he had been sent to Northumberland and kept there these last six weeks with a like malicious purpose, was equally certain. But how about the interval, during which everybody had kept or been kept out of his sight? Suddenly the words 'I will never marry whom I do not love,' came ringing in his ears in the silence of the night. All the doubts and questionings that they set going were what had to be borne, and did not drive him mad, only because the friendliness of oblivious lunacy is not for us at such moments.

Recovered, the next morning, from the stunning effect of the sudden blow, he was more conscious,

and now of course therefore thoroughly miserable. Appetite had left him ; and he sate staring at the breakfast things, neither offering to do anything with them, nor yet ringing for them to be taken away. So he remained till the door was opened, and Horncastle entered. Grattan's face was grave enough, but for all that was not downcast.

‘A bad business, this,’ he said. ‘But now is the time to show the stuff you are made of.’

‘You know all?’

‘Yes ; Bracebridge has told me this morning. I will be silent, if you insist on it. I will go away, if you order it. But if I may stop and am to talk to you on the subject, I must be allowed to be just as frank and outspoken as I have always been. May I be so?’

‘Yes,’ said Mortimer.

‘And you must be patient, and not irritable. First and foremost, you were simply mad to return the cheque as Bracebridge tells me you did. You only make bad worse, and by persisting in such a course, will add ruin to disappointment. What is the state of the case? You love—or loved, for I cannot think you are child enough to love still—a

girl who has married somebody else. Whether she loves him or not, she certainly cannot love you, and we may weigh the question without taking her into consideration. Your choice then remains between two thousand a-year and nothing. Leave old Dyneley his toy, and you take his money. So will you best show your disregard of what ought to be disregarded, and your regard for what not only ought to be regarded, but what is absolutely necessary. He in a matter of passion has done what people usually do—preferred himself to anybody else; and she and her parents have thrown you over. You cannot recover her; and she would not be worth having if you could. He, as is evident from his letter, wishes to be of greater use to you than ever. There is but one course for a sensible man to take.’

‘And that is?’

‘To sit down at once and write another letter to old Dyneley, and tell him that you returned his cheque in the irritation of the moment, but that on second consideration, you are satisfied to accept the inevitable and his offer. You will do it?’

‘Not if I were to be hacked limb from limb.’

‘Mortimer! you are mad.’

‘Mad or not mad, I have spoken my firm and final purpose. You cannot say I have been either impatient or irritable. I have listened to you through. I prefer not to argue; for perhaps I might grow into being irritable. This only will I say in answer. Supposing Isabelle have been as shallow and treacherous as the rest, I want no seeming victory purchased by the scorn of self-respect as well as of her. I have replied to your only argument on the supposition that your facts are correct. For anything I know as yet, they are not.’

Horncastle did not yield, but put the matter in every conceivable light that could second his purpose. He had talked for twenty minutes without extracting a single remark from Mortimer. At last he said:

‘Will you think over what I say?’

‘You have got the only words from me you will ever get, if you talk till doomsday.’

‘Am I right in believing that your income came wholly from your cousin?’

‘Quite right.’

‘And now you will be without a penny?’

‘Precisely.’

Again he urged, and again in vain. This time he got no answer at all.

‘What then do you intend to do?’

‘That is a question which, as you may suppose, I have not had time to consider; but if I had fully considered it and had been forced to the conclusion that I shall have to clean a crossing, it would not alter my determination not to defile my life.’

‘You are not angry, after all?’

‘My dear Grattan, no. I think I may be excused if I answer you roughly. You will have to bear with me and *my* plain speaking more than ever. However, the future will be the more likely to thrive for not being clogged by the past. I cut away *all* the past. But at present, of course, I have no plan.’

‘I have something very disagreeable to tell you.’

‘Tell it. You could not do so at a moment when I am less likely to feel it.’

‘That bill for three hundred pounds is due again, and they will not renew, and I cannot pay it.’

‘I can,’ said Mortimer quietly.

‘Why, how?’

‘Bill of sale on furniture and effects at Grace-wood.’

‘My dear fellow!’

‘There’s nothing else for it.’

‘It must not be. I never intended this.’

‘Nor I. It must be, all the same.’

‘O no! Hold up your head, and we shall pull through. Would not your bankers advance it? or anybody, in fine?’

‘Yes; everybody, probably. I have no doubt I could take this last letter of my cousin’s into the market and get ten thousand pounds on it to-morrow. But I am not going to do so.’

‘Of course not. But you can raise money within even your present means, and so stave off any such monstrous idea as selling your furniture.’

‘Why stave it off, since it must come?’

‘It need not come. Even if you doggedly refuse to be on terms with your cousin, you can make as much as will keep you going.’

‘At what? Why, you know well enough that, were I inclined a second time to rely upon other people’s interest and favour, a clerkship of some-

where about eighty or ninety pounds a-year would be the outside of what I could possibly get. A nice sum to keep up Gracewood with. Make your mind as easy as you can about the three hundred pounds. I know you are sorry, and would not have let me in for it had you guessed what was coming.'

'You may be sure of that. But it seems to me we are going to tumble together.'

'I hope not, Grattan; I hope not. But if your holding on depends on my doing so, it's a bad look-out for you.'

'Ah! my dear fellow.' And again he pleaded with every plausible ingenuity and art, but uselessly.

'When is the bill due?'

'To-morrow.'

'That's all right. The sooner, the better. I can pay it and every other liability I have, with ease. And I am only too glad that some of the last of my fortune should go in doing a good turn to a fellow I care for as much as for you.'

'You will get it back, of course. But I am quite sure there is no necessity for these extreme measures. There must be heaps of people who will see you through this difficulty.'

‘All to no purpose, Grattan. I have had enough of other people’s assistance. I will now do something for myself, however poor and miserable that something may prove, as it probably will.’

Horncastle saw that no impression was to be made at present. His friend was in a frame of mind which argument, good or bad, equally irritated. His fear was that it was a frame of mind which might last. As he rose to go, Mortimer said :—

‘If the bill be due to-morrow, to-morrow it must be met, and there is no time to do anything towards raising the money. My bankers, however, will let me overdraw to that amount, and I shall then have breathing time to get right — indeed, to close my account, when I have parted with my things.’

Horncastle was going to speak. Mortimer stopped him.

‘Now, do not think, my dear fellow, that *you* are making me part with them. I should—I *must* — in any case now; quite independently,’ and he tried to smile, ‘of this feather of yours which, be sure, has nothing on earth to do with breaking the camel’s back.’

It may at first seem strange that Mortimer should not have bethought himself to turn to some of his father's old friends, who were certainly ready to hold out a helping hand at the time of his return from Italy, immediately after 'dear Jack Dyneley's' death. But it should be remembered that time had flown since then, and that the men who might then have regarded him as possessing some sort of social claim upon them, would not now be very blameworthy if they were to regard him more or less as a stranger. They had long since passed out of his mind. Was it wonderful if he had long since passed out of theirs? Their consciences, upon which there had never really been any grave responsibility, had been completely absolved of what little load there was, by hearing of the adoption of the young fellow by his well-to-do cousin, and of the prosperous start in life which he had made. A man who comes and asks for a second lift, confessing that the first lift has failed to benefit him, comes with a very much worse case than if he had never craved help before. In Mortimer's instance, perhaps, a good excuse could be made out for the first lift ending so disastrously. But what a story to go

about with ! No tatterdemalion whose bare body peeps out at a thousand-and-one tears, ever displayed so much of what it is customary to hide as Mortimer would have to show, if he defended his prayer for aid by narrating the *infandum dolorem* of his utter break-down. Such a pitiable story could not be told.

But quite apart from all these considerations, the revulsion of feeling, springing from the bitter sense of the position into which easy and pleasant dependence had brought him, forbade him to entertain for so much as a moment the thought of any more leaning upon others. I verily believe that, if some good Samaritan had offered him a lift on his ass, he would have been decently thankful, but would have declared his intention of crawling on to Jericho by himself as best he could, and if needs be, on all fours.

Thinking matters over as quietly as he could, he arrived at the conclusion that, if he could make any money at all—which for bare life must be made—he must make it by his pen. This, his idea, he communicated to Bracebridge, asking for information upon a subject about which he was as ignorant as a child.

‘It’s mighty hard work making anything,’ said Bracebridge ; ‘anything. I do all sorts of things—all sorts. I scarcely know what I don’t do. And you may guess what I make ; just nothing—nothing. And I’m always here—always. However, you may do better ; I can’t tell. You *may*, I say—may ; but it’s mighty hard work, it is ; that’s all.’

Be it remembered that I am writing of twenty years ago, before daily penny papers were known, and when the demand for journalistic labour of all kinds, which now, I suppose, is in decent equilibrium with the supply, had sprung into existence. There were a few men then, as there are now, who made handsome incomes by their pen ; but there was not then, as now, a regular army of laborious writers and workers, making moderate incomes varying from two to four or five hundred a-year. But few as were then these last, they had all the characteristics of their modern successors. Let us do brave men justice. From my heart I honour the hard, determined, never-say-die desperadoes of literature who do, to the best of their ability, the honestest literary labour they can get—labour which the world wants doing, but which it will not pay over

heavily for. But when honour is thus given where honour is assuredly due, it cannot be denied that most of these stout hearts, living as they do from pen to mouth, are sad and permanent Bohemians, frequenters of taverns, friends of the long clay-pipe, believers in supper anywhere and at any time, provided it be hot and not over-costly. Surely I shall be misunderstood if it be imagined for an instant that I see anything in this to condemn, or even, philosophically speaking, to regret. But I note it in order to be able to point out with full force what sort of company, for the most part, was honest Guy Bracebridge's, and what sort of entertainment, fellowship, and employment he could hold out to that artistic sybarite, who had not a single rose-leaf left, Mortimer Dyneley.

Five weeks more, and that same Mortimer stood on the sloping lawn at Gracewood. The prismatic glory of summer had departed. The flower-beds showed bright and gay with geraniums scarlet no more. The long strips, lately golden with heavy-lobed calceolarias, looked brown, tangled, and untidy. The many-coloured verbenas were downcast and draggled. The brave row of orderly dahlias

was drooping ; and even the hollyhocks, longest to hold out, had a sere, smitten look. The afternoon was mild, and ever and anon sweet with snatches of October sunshine. But every breath of air, however soft or transitory, swept along with it shrivelled and discoloured autumn leaves. Branches every moment waxing bare, and stubble-fields from which all the harvest had gone, filled up the prospect, whose melancholy was only deepened by the beauty which had not yet wholly deserted it.

He was about to leave it for ever. In these last solitary moments seemed epitomized all the feelings which, in his brief possession, had gathered about it. He thought of the long sweet summer mornings, spent in placid self-cultivation ; of the never-ending leafy lanes along which, of quiet afternoons, he had desultorily ridden ; of the gracious evenings, with the soft long shadows, which he had filled with the meditative fumes of the rest-giving cigar. And then he wandered into the later and still summer-time, when the inviting woodland, towards which his eyes were turned, took him from the silent slopes of home to the umbrageous intricacies of Alwoodley

Chase, almost celestialized by the witchery of unanticipated Love. And all were of the past. He must go. There are occasions when, though no sentence of outlawry be pronounced, a man feels as much driven from his country as if the shells have been deposited in the urn, and the fiat of ostracism has gone forth. So was it with Mortimer. No audible voice had arisen to expel him from the land. Still he must go. And going, he could not have the comfort or be supported by the dignity of voluntary exile.

Nothing had been removed from the cottage. There it stood, in its perfect picturesque proportions, without and within the fulfilment of an artist's dream. The slamming of a heavy gate woke him from its final indulgence. He listened. It was the sound of a horse's hoof. He moved a little down the lawn, to where he could get a peep through the shrubs and over the oak paling into the lane. He just caught sight of the ears of the bay mare, the friend of the long-striding roan that had cast its shoe. She had been sold that morning, and was being led away. For the first time since

the blow was stricken, tears that had often struggled for mastery, fought their way as far as his eyes. He pulled his hat down over them, passed through the cottage, and hurried away. Faster—faster—faster: as though he feared, should he linger, to hear the crash of the roof-tree !

END OF PART I.

PART THE SECOND.

DEFEAT.

CHAPTER I.

WHEN, after a quarter of a century's exhausting struggle, Europe resolved to exchange the horrors of war for the horrors of peace, a good many weary and impoverished people sat themselves down in the chief town of the department of Calvados.

The repose obtainable from a city is by no means to be measured by its own quietness. The two most unstimulating capitals in the world are and have long been Rome and Venice: yet the former can give to an intelligent sojourner no sense of repose; and even gondolas cannot rid the dweller by the Adriatic lagunes of the penetrating and permanent curse of purposeless unrest.

But who could not be at peace at Caen? Just far enough removed from the ocean never to hear

the fretful thunder of its billows, it is sufficiently linked with the fortunes of the sea not to be irritated by a sense of extrusion from the outer world. Such as the Religious in old spiritual books is commended to remain in a planet whose course is questionable, it is *in* the world, yet scarcely *of* it. Vessels not exceeding two hundred tons may find their way to its tiny port by the Orne or the Odon ; but they are the mere intimation of the sail-borne argosies which plough the contiguous deep and vex the sleep of unwiser men. It has a history ; so has no need to swell the turmoil of the nineteenth century with any pretensions to modern eminence. It is no red-brick or stucco adventurer, just emerging into notice, and aiming at evanescent mastery. Its biography goes back to the third century ; and its foundation is commingled with the rude fortunes of Saxon pirates, who were more respectable gentlemen than their modern representatives in Eastern seas. In spite of the fortifications of so notable a soldier as William the Bastard, it has thrice endured the honours of siege and the fate of capture. Kings, both French and English, have preferred it as a royal residence ; and within its walls are still

the ashes of a Conqueror, whose influence on the affairs of mankind, as far as such can be visibly traced, has been greater than that of any other individual whose name has been preserved by history—the Norman William who won at Hastings. In the middle of the choir of the church of St. Stephen, white marble notifies the spot of his rest; and not far off, in the Abbaye aux Dames, the Church of the Holy Trinity, you may read of the Duchess-queen, the Conqueror's consort Matilda.

The old Château, ascribed to the same mighty but long since mouldered hand, has been dismantled, and can pretend to no greater importance than such as invariably affixes itself, where Frenchmen sway, to a barrack; but a Place d'Armes still confers on it a look of something like majesty, and such trees as consent to grow in Normandy are scattered around it in pleasant embellishment.

When old Europe's knees went all a-tremble at the shouts with which the long-pent-up impulses of the fiery Frank broke themselves to good purpose against the Bastile, Gustave de Saintfront was a little boy, with a face like that of Murillo's St. John the Baptist, and a temper very much resembling

that of the typical Lucifer after dethronement. His parents, royalists born and so remaining, escaped the lot of the less fortunate, and found in England such comfort as consists in almost penniless exile. Gustave became a politician very early; and without knowing very well what he was talking about, he embraced the theory of the Rights of Man, and ascribed the misfortunes of his family, which he was quite capable of understanding, to their perverseness in adopting the wrong side and standing by it. By the time he was sixteen, he was all for joining the revolutionary armies, and rushing along with them through Europe under the glorious awning of the tricolor. The death of his mother and the coronation of the military marvel in whom the popular uprising had for a time culminated, changed the aspect of Gustave's fortunes. His aspirations had perhaps calmed down into a scarcely blameworthy desire 'to do something;' and as the young fellow still chattered about battles, and his sire was in no position to hold out any other temptation, he was at last allowed to range himself and sword under the Imperial Eagles. The *bâton* is justly supposed to be within the possible reach

of every subaltern in France ; but every man, be he brave and true as you will, cannot get it. And Gustave de Saintfront did not. And when it became pretty evident in 1816 that there would be no more fighting in Europe for some time to come, he quitted the army, in which he held the rank of major, and settled down at Caen. His other parent had died ; all his youthful dreams had gone where had also gone the smoke of so much artillery. He had, perhaps, five thousand francs — about two hundred pounds—a-year, and no object except to get through the rest of life quietly.

For eight years he was as quiet as man well can be. With the exception of three brief visits to the capital, he never stirred from his provincial home. He played dominoes, sipped coffee, and smoked tobacco, and that was all. He had growu to be in his own estimation, what he was in other people's, an apparently ordinary person, with gentlemanly bearing and obliging but never officious manners. Not only had he ceased entirely to trouble himself about a law of nature, social rights, and international brotherhood ; but he had also come to be perfectly indifferent to the abilities and pretensions

of that once tremendous personage, himself. He was probably the least vain Frenchman in the king's dominions. But in the year 1823, something of the old fire began to manifest itself, though in a new and peculiar direction. That English maidens are desperate flirts, was then as firm a conviction in the mind of our male friends across the Straits as it is now. And the sparkling and, it must be confessed, rather wandering eyes of the young ladies, mostly of British extraction, in Madame Planeau's Pension, in the Rue Saint-Pierre, somewhat corroborated the prevailing view. More honourable in his notions of the tie that ought to subsist between men and women than, I am forced to say, are usually those of his countrymen, Gustave de Saint-front did not pique himself upon fancying that he had attracted the attention of a very fair, but perhaps rather forward school-girl, without feeling that she was too lovely and sacred to be approached defiantly. I am excusing neither; but not any the less do I think that you have no very great right to accuse them. It was all done dexterously and secretly; but at any rate when poor Madame Planeau, nearly wild with terror, had to write to

Miss Pearson's uncle and inform him of the abduction of his ward, she could plead as some justification that the thief was a gentleman, an officer, and now the ward's husband. Judge of her relief, when, after having ascertained all these allegations to be true, he wrote to her to say that she was not at all open to blame in the matter, and that so well satisfied was he with her establishment that, at the commencement of the following year, he should commit two more nieces, his remaining wards, to her excellent care. To Madame de Saintfront, it is true, he wrote differently, though not angrily. He merely said that she had treated him very badly, but that he was glad to hear she was comfortably settled, and trusted he should never hear anything more of her. He never did. She lived very tolerably with her husband, who was now a confirmed quietudinarian, for ten years, when she slipped away from him, just as quietly as she had slipped away from the Rue Saint-Pierre, into her grave. It was an awful blow to him. Its only mitigation was the dead mother's picture, living and blooming in a shy little girl, known, after her parent, by the English name of Marian.

It was well for the retired soldier that he had grown calmer, wiser, and more philosophic, for his troubles were not yet complete. On the whole, for a man who had smelt so much powder, he could not accuse fortune of sending him too many hard hits. He had of course received a fair number of surface scratches. Once, and once only, had a ball done him any real damage. He had been struck in the thigh, but had seconded skilful and immediate treatment with so sound a physique, that, after a brief time in hospital, he had scarcely ever had reason to give his wound another thought; but time pays off old scores, and in his fifty-fourth year, he was sorely reminded of a mishap which had occurred a quarter of a century back, and of which he imagined he had heard the last. From bad to worse. Treatment made it no better; and age made it incurable lameness. So that now, when Marian was just turned nineteen and himself sixty, he was obliged to make use of her young arm, and a crutch to boot.

Marian was almost as shy, and quite as bonnie at nineteen as she had been at nine. Her sole friend was her father. He never had cause to

make himself anxious, as fathers placed as he was usually have or ought to make themselves, about obtaining for his daughter fitting society and entertainment. The first she shrank from; and as he did not want it for himself, there was no necessity for seeking it. Entertainment she found in attending and listening to him. I say in listening; for she very rarely talked, and never for very long continuously. They conversed indifferently in the two languages; but English was evidently her, just as much as French was evidently his, mother-tongue. His career had not made him much of a theologian; and the religion of the runaway school-girl was a Protestantism not proof against the practice of a husband. Marian had grown up a hybrid in the matter. She held those dogmas which are common to Roman Catholicism and its supposed opponent; and those about which they quarrelled, she unconsciously left alone. She loved God and her father, and the glorious old Church of Saint-Etienne, its arches, windows, organ-music, procession, and litanies. But she never felt any necessity or impulse to enter its little confessionals. Any secrets she had, she told her father; and when

his leg was not very bad, was always accompanied by him to High Mass of a Sunday. When it made him a prisoner, she had to go alone. But she always went. In practice, modern Roman Catholicism is often very tolerant, and is as a rule much less inquisitive about a man's or woman's religious opinions than its respectable rival. In England the state of Marian's soul would not have escaped more intrusive scrutiny. It could perhaps have borne, but would probably have not been made any happier, for the ordeal.

It was the 25th March, 1843, the Feast of the Annunciation. Once was it my pleasant lot to spend it in the saddle along the almost unmatched bridle-path which waywardly winds by old Affile from Subiaco to more modern Alevano, through which I was wending my course to once fortune-worshipping but now fortune-abandoned Præneste. All along the mountain footholds were little by-path chapels, where magnificent women and children as if of the gods, all in picturesque holiday attire, knelt in spontaneously artistic groups and prayed to be prayed for by the Madonna, on the anniversary of the day when the angel had declared her Blessed.

The Volscian mountains were full in view, and nigh at hand was the country of the Hernici. Rojate and Poli and Civitella and Paliano and Capranico, and a score of other high-perched villages above and around, were holding kindred festivity in their glorious eyries. God and the Madonna go with you! was the greeting I got from every man, woman, and child, on that intoxicating journey.

But not to bristling hill-peaks alone is the devotion confined. And simple, lowly Caen was busy in Saint-Etienne with its incense, its music, and its novenas. Marian was amongst the praying crowd. Her father, who had lately been suffering acutely from his lameness and who was also afraid to venture where there was sure to be an unusual crush, had been left by her on his favourite seat near the Place d'Armes. It was their custom for her often, after escorting him there, to leave him alone for two or three hours with his book, his journal, or his cigar, and to rejoin and help him back home when he wished to return to their quiet little house. To-day had arrived a regular batch of newspapers from Paris; and receiving assurances from him that he should get on famously without her for a couple of

hours, she had hurried off to the cathedral for the Procession, and the Benediction with which it was to close. It was a beautiful afternoon, and everybody was there. Never had the dear Madonna been more worthily honoured. But when, the music and lights and incense and cantiques over, the devout worshippers rose from their knees to go, they in common with Marian were dreadfully distressed to find that Spring's proverbial fickleness had played them an ugly turn, even on such a day as this. Their consternation was naturally enough connected with concern for the spick-and-span new skirts and caps with which they had intended to do honour to the festival. But Marian's thoughts immediately turned to her father, whom she had left sitting alone and so comparatively helpless in the open air ; and she ran with all her speed to the Place d'Armes. To her surprise, but partly to her comfort, he was not there. In order for her comfort to be complete, however, she must find him at home. And thither, out of breath but scarcely slackening her speed, she hurried. There, sure enough, he was, comfortably reading.

‘Oh, I have had such a run. I did not know it

was raining till we all came out of the cathedral, or I should have gone to you before. I went as fast as ever I could to the Place, and then on here. But how did you manage to get home without me?’

‘How do you think? One of your countrymen’—Monsieur de Saintfront always called her his ‘little English daughter’—‘one of your countrymen assisted me. We call them rude and ill-mannered. I declare I have always found them the contrary. He was quite a cavalier—such as we rarely see now, *petite!*’

‘It was very good of him.’

‘He came in with me, and has only just gone. He said he had noticed, once or twice, your coming to help the poor lame old fellow home; and, passing just as rain was coming on, he offered me his arm. A stronger one than yours, *mignonne*, and that was not so much tried with the weight as yours must often be.’

‘It never is, papa mine. I do not like his arm or him; I am jealous.’ And she kissed his wrinkled forehead affectionately.

‘Then he shall not do it again, pet.’

‘Yes, he shall. I am *not* jealous at all. I am very much obliged to him.’

‘Then you will have an opportunity of thanking him, some time. We had a famous talk. He is very intelligent, but a little stately for a young man.’

‘He is young?’

‘In his best youth.’

‘What is his name? And is he living in Caen?’

‘I really do not know. Men do not ask each other such questions at once. It is only you busy prying little women who have so much courage.’ And so he bantered her.

But the name of the young Englishman was Mortimer Dyneley, and in Caen was he now residing. He had been here nearly three months, having spent the two which intervened between his arrival and his leaving England, in tentative but unsatisfactory sojourns along the French coast. It will be remembered that in the first chapter of that part of this history which we have just concluded, it was stated that the nine hundred pounds which were all he received at his father’s death—the proceeds of the celebrated sale of wine—had been expended partly

in bringing Gracewood into order, and partly in furnishing it. Three or four hundred pounds more had since been spent there by him; but they had been sunk more in horseflesh, harness, and stable-fittings, than in anything else. It will also perhaps not be forgotten that he originally took the cottage on a long lease at a rental of 60*l.* per annum, and that he had calculated upon being able, should some diplomatic appointment abroad be obtained for him by his cousin, to let it for a hundred and thirty. Little did he imagine at the time that he would have to look out for a tenant under circumstances such as had since arisen. The want had occurred at a most unfortunate time, *viz.* at the fall of the year. And now, at Lady Day, it remained still unlet. After selling off everything, horses and all, meeting Horncastle's bill of three hundred pounds, and settling every account of his own, he found himself in possession of ninety-five pounds five shillings precisely. This as his capital, seventy pounds (not yet assured) as his income, and a very heavy heart, completed his equipment.

A new theory of life, even though it directly contradicted and throw over an old and long-entertained

one, provided that it fits in with our whims, our vanity, or our convenience, stands a fair chance of being accepted. But it will not, like its established predecessor, endure any very hard shocks. We saw how, under the continued pressure of external circumstances, Mortimer, during his last visit to Northumberland, had come to construct a social theory, into which hard rough work, struggles for power and pre-eminence, and designs pretty much akin to those of other people were allowed to enter, provided they forwarded the noble end of saving and marrying a girl loving and loved. This was certainly at direct issue with his original notions of the desirability, if not the duty, of holding oneself aloof from the vulgar scrimmage into which life had come to be degraded, and of postponing all schemes of personal success, or even public advancement, to the supreme scheme of self-cultivation. But if he was to end victoriously a campaign which he had rashly commenced, there was nothing else for it but to frame the new theory, or, whilst retaining the old one, to fly in its face. And as it was not in his nature to believe one thing and do another, he at last frankly accepted the new theory, and was prepared

to use it for his guidance, and act upon it at once. Instantaneously almost, all action upon any such plan was ruthlessly prevented; and away with the possibility of carrying it into practice, went the new theory in a moment. It more than went. It not only fell to pieces, but it was loathed and despised. With a rapid revulsion of feeling, Mortimer fell back hastily upon the old sociological belief in which the self-regarding maxims held, if not supremacy, at least a sovereign priority. Man was man alone by virtue of his dignity. A warehouse a hundred yards high was different in degree but not in kind from a molehill three inches, or a beaver's hut two feet. A wren's nest was quite as good a proof of spirituality as a modern drawing-room. The winter's store in a beehive could stand at the judgment-seat of the rights of immortality with full as just a grace as fifty-thousand pounds on the credit-side of a banker's book. The railway bills hustled through Parliament had quite as little to do with celestial movements as the sets-to of cockchafers or the thieving of cuckoos. The considerations which entered into feathered marriages were not quite so complicated, but, to say the least, were as pure and defensible as

those that entered into flounced ones. The forum was just as bad as the market-place, and the altar was the mere humble registering servitor of the salon. Money-making and tripping each other up with a bullion-shovel, telling the buyer to look out, and devoting to the devil a huge holocaust of the hindmost, could no more be properly said to constitute life than the old rascally '*Balnea, vina, Venus.*' What could save society, society had better find out, if society could find time to give the thing a thought. But what could alone save the individual was the old admonition '*rerum cognoscere causas,*' to get at the root of things, and be in constant harmony with *them*. Discord with such a transitory phenomenon as modern civilization was no discord at all. Concord with it could not be permanent, and was meanwhile a jangle with Nature, that no listening soul could for a moment endure. To give the modern world the go-by—behold the beginning and the end of wisdom. Nowhere, it appeared, could it be better and more cheaply done than at Caen.

Very cheaply indeed. This 'self-cultivation,' upon which he had formerly so much insisted, and upon which he was now inclined to insist again, had

hitherto been prosecuted under considerable external advantages. It is all very well for a man whose house, though small, is replete with every reasonable comfort and every possible elegance ; whose garden, though but a modest enclosure, has every shrub that adorns, and every flower that decorates ; whose wants, if few, are ministered unto at every turn, and for the gratification of which he had neither to toil nor to spin : it is all very well for such a one to take high ground, and to affect a life careless of mankind. But to maintain such lofty principles, much more their consistent practice, on seventy pounds a-year, is not quite so easy. Still he was for doing it, were it possible. So deep was his disgust with any other arrangement, so complete his revulsion from any meaner experiment.

Whether it be that there really exists an unemonstrable Law by which Fortune does favour people in the special matter in which they are peculiarly brave, certain it is that the little flat *au troisième* in which Mortimer Dyneley had taken up his abode, had the prettiest out-look and was, within, the most pleasing of any in the town of Caen. Jeannette, his only attendant, had always understood

that these English had no taste at all. Monsieur at any rate was an exception, and was the most difficult gentleman she had ever come across.

The rooms were furnished when Mortimer took them; but, despite his small capital, he really could not stand the sight of some of the articles which infested the apartments. On the whole there was very little positively to complain of; much less, it will readily be supposed, than there would have been in a kindred locality in England. So that what with a few small knick-knacks preserved from the dispersion of Gracewood, skilful nailing and tinkering on the part of Jeannette, and the outlay of twelve pounds, Mortimer could at last walk about his rooms with his eyes open, and not be unpleasantly affected.

So he had done what he assured Horncastle he was resolved to do? Precisely. He had cut away all the past, and let it go drifting where it would. From Horncastle, who had never pretended to be a correspondent, he had heard but once, and scarcely expected to hear again; unless—which he considered improbable, and did not at all count upon—he should be enriched by the return of the three

hundred pounds. With Bracebridge, and with him alone, did he preserve regular communications. He had told Guy honestly that the devil-may-care life which was led by the journalistic free-lances with whom Guy associated (though it must not be supposed that they were not much sharper fellows than poor blundering Guy) would never do for *him*. It was an honest life enough, a brave life, a necessary life perhaps ; but it would be no life at all to him. It would be death, sheer death-in-life, and nothing else. London, under the most fortunate aspect, was to him terrible. Putting him there would be like putting the poor mouse under the experimental receiver. His mind, his nature, would not be able to breathe in it. He was immensely obliged to Guy, who had offered him a free share of his rooms in the Temple, and introductions towards getting something to do wherever Guy had been able to get anything himself.

‘ Thanks, old boy ! ’ he had said ; ‘ unutterable thanks ! It’s just like you ; and I suppose I don’t feel half grateful enough, because I knew beforehand that you would do it. But you know that I am a wretched, demoralized Sybarite, and that it is

positively too late to mend. I cannot stand the sound of waggon-wheels, and the cry of fresh or stale anything. I don't like long clays, cannot consort with spittoons, should prefer, on the whole, the Cave of Trophonius to the Cave of Harmony, have no song, and am one too many at a supper. Let me go, old boy, where I can be quiet and think it all out, and see if paternal Time will not give me a lift in due course. I'm awfully sorry to leave you, and will send you a stave regularly.'

'Sorry!' answered Bracebridge. 'Sorry! It's the very worst hit I've ever had. The worst. And I've had some bad ones in my time; *I* have. Upon my soul, I think it's your connection with me that had ruined you.'

'My connection with *you*! How?'

'How? Oh, luck, luck; that's all. Just luck, and nothing else. Why do some fellows—some, though I'm not one—some fellows—why do they get on, and others don't? Don't; as *I* have never done, and never shall do. Why, who on earth would—or could: *could*—prophesy that you would come such a cropper? Nobody. And yet you have come it. The very worst cropper I ever

heard tell of. The worst. Except my own, my own. Oh, but I *never* had a chance. Never. And never shall have. Ah! it's awful. I wish you weren't going.'

'Well, I cannot say I wish I were not; for of course, on the whole, I am glad—if the word glad can be used at all in such a case—glad I am going. But I am not the less sorry to leave *you*.'

'At any rate, I'll do all I can—'

'I am sure you will.'

'—all I can for you in your absence. Only you must not be surprised if the all amounts to very little or even to nothing. There's awful competition, and egad! it grows worse. Worse. I make less than I did: less; and it was little enough to begin with. But I'll do my best. Of course I'll do my best.'

They had parted as Englishmen do part, looking as if they were very glad to get rid of each other, but feeling very differently. In promising to do his best for Mortimer, Bracebridge referred to an arrangement between them that he would, on receiving any manuscript from his friend, exert himself to dispose of it. Regular journalistic work, at such a distance from London, was quite out of the question. And

what sort of work it was to be at all, Mortimer knew when they parted almost as little as Bracebridge himself. But that the pen was to be somehow the means of adding an annual something to the poor seventy pounds which was all he now could come to count upon, was the decision at which he had arrived.

And had he really cut away *all* the Past? Yes, all : mercilessly. Had he made no inquiries about her around whom, so brief a while ago, his thoughts had constantly circled? None whatever. And not only had he manifested no curiosity. He had likewise done everything in his power to repress every rising reflection. He had passed upon her no judgment. He had even refused in his own mind to allow her to be arraigned. Equally, he had not acquitted her. Whenever—and it was often, very often—she rose up before him, he outwardly knit his brow, and inwardly strove to turn away. He had maintained this mental attitude for now six months. He had yet to learn what savage but bootless affectation it was. Possibly he might, by trying, arrive in time at the complete extirpation of the idea of her from his life ; but it would

be only by resolute delving at and below the roots. If he did not uproot her, she would remain where she was—deep and determined in his heart: and when the season favoured, she would again put out tender shoots, mount into prominence, and once more overshadow him.

Yet, how was she to be uprooted? By hatred, or contempt? There was no third method. Ah yes! there was. By love. Just as, were she proved to have been treacherous or heartless, she might rightly be loathed or despised, so were she proved to have been only unfortunate, she might be regarded with a love that no longer was encumbered with desire. She might fade into the land of beautiful dreams. But he had no data, and he wanted none, to enable him to shape his decision. He gave her, as he was giving the world, the go-by.

Still for all his obstinate renunciation, when bell rang for vessels to leave the quay, his thoughts would run off to Rhine steamboats, and away to guttural voices shouting ‘Coblentz! Coblentz!’ And thus started off on travel, his mind wandered on to the soft blue lakes, crocus-dappled orchards, tumbling torrents, snow-white peaks, dairy-smelling

châlets, and tortuous mountain-tracks of wholesome Switzerland. And then he found himself among deciduous chestnuts, hearing the softer sounds—all vowels and matin-chimes and ave-maria bells—of castellated Italy. But whether by rushing river, slumberous lake, or wide cathedral steps, he saw the same two constant figures: a girl with fair hair, and by her side a blanced sexagenarian. Both always had their backs to him; and do what he would, he could not get them to turn and show their faces.

CHAPTER II.

IF a man whose familiarity with the piano was confined to an acquaintance, and that but an indifferent one, with what is technically called the scales, were to sit down and offer to play an original or even imitative air, we should assuredly think him not so much conceited as insane. Rather better than ordinary conversation or ordinary letter-writing is little if any more than the scales of literary composition. Yet, strange to say, we do not condemn as peculiarly vain, much less as mad, the man or woman who, on the strength of a little practice of the former, pretends to tolerable or even meritorious performance in the latter. Yet certainly the charlatanism of the one is, when calmly examined, as patent as the charlatanism of the other. That the power of speech is a human gift in any other sense than that the power of making steel is such, will be contended now-a-days

by no one aspiring to scientific accuracy ; and that the power of grammatical and logical composition is an advance in constructive craft upon simple speech, just as making a cylinder is a similar advance upon merely casting the metal of which it is to consist, would honestly seem to be but a corollary from the prior concession. Yet who, from acquired experience in the furnace, would think of at once entering the workshop, and straightway propose to be allowed to construct a piston or possibly an entire steam-engine, particularly in days when there are people who, from long labour, have arrived at considerable skill in these methods ? Yet he would be guilty of doing nothing more arrogant than is done daily now by gentlemen who, on the strength of post-prandial dissertations, presume to be parliamentarians, or by ladies who on the strength of careless correspondence, consider themselves entitled to be the literary lights of a nation.

This truth was brought painfully home to Mortimer Dyneley, when first he attempted to render a definite and consecutive account of what he wanted to say to the public who were to remunerate him for saying it. He had one advantage and one

disadvantage over most of the ‘fools who rush in,’ glanced at above. He had always been a thoughtful man, and travel and social experience had afforded him material for indulging his reflections. So that he really had something to say. This was his advantage, as against those who have always been too busy to think or too much home-tied to have much to think about, and so have virtually nothing to say. But equally had he, as compared with these, a marked disadvantage. Though, partly in common with them, he had been accustomed to talk without painfully measuring the exact meaning, or considering the precise harmony of his words, and had been perfectly well satisfied with his letters if they conveyed his intentions, he had from boyhood upwards been familiar and fondly familiar with orators, historians, essayists, and poets, who had taken the weight of their language and calculated the proportions of their sentences, with a care as jealous as that with which a modern chemist takes the weight of his ingredients. What sort of inexact stuff we shall talk and write in twenty years more, when the loose language of circulating libraries and the diction of daily leading articles,

(often written by men of immense capacity, but always in unnatural haste) have been thoroughly absorbed by us, I shudder at imagining. I am writing of twenty years ago, when, as every impartial person will testify, matters were not quite so bad as they are now. Yet even then Hazlitt (who may, by comparison, be now almost deemed a classic) was more in vogue than Steele or Addison. And what are even these last when judged by the severe standard of those by a study of whose craft they learned to write? And the original old masters were precisely the teachers with whom Mortimer Dyneley was best acquainted.

It was not wonderful if they had made him critical and censorious. Unfortunately—as it turned out now—he had not learned how to imitate them : he had learned only how to admire. He had not acquired from them the craft of what is right ; but he had acquired almost a complete knowledge of what is wrong. He could not write what he would approve ; but it was quite impossible for him to write what he did not. So that while many a score of people were writing with fluent pen the first thing that came into their heads in the first or finest

language that came upon their lips, he sate biting his pen, and pushing back his hair, unable to write at all, or at any rate anything which, when written, he could for shame allow to remain upon paper. To the man who wanted money, and who saw no other means of making it but by the satisfactory combination of words, this was indeed a disadvantage. Better — for the present purpose — to have written spontaneous rubbish and not known it. Throw plenty of mud, it is said, and some of it will stick. Send plenty of stuff to Guy Bracebridge, and it would be funny if he did not contrive to get some of it inserted somewhere. As it was, Mortimer had as yet sent him nothing.

For in addition to this manifest disadvantage, that which at first we should be inclined to characterize, and therefore pointed out as an advantage, was perhaps at the commencement of his attempts rather a drawback. It is true, as we noted, that he had something, and indeed a good deal, to say; but until a man has acquired the craft of his art, the fewer and the smaller his conceptions, the more easy and ready will he find his execution. Most boys, with strong poetical or rhetorical tendencies, having

as yet nothing to utter which they have not read or heard of already elsewhere, deliver themselves by pen or tongue with extreme rapidity, the colouring being usually as little their own as the conception. As they grow into mental puberty, and begin to manifest signs of creative power, they then discover that gestation is a slow and usually painful process. Words that used to be so ready to hand, have grown strangely unmanageable, especially as they are required to run steady with other words equally indocile. They who, as boys, wrote much and fast, now write little and slowly. By degrees something of the old facility, without much of the old recklessness, returns. And in some grand supreme instances, men's thoughts, the most profound and complicated, have come to shape themselves in appropriate garb with a spontaneity analogous to that with which the laburnum expresses itself in yellow tassels, or the chestnut in scented cones. These are indeed to be envied in their consummate attainment of natural art, as the boys are to be envied in their primitive ignorance of it. But how little suggestive of envy is his lot who, enriched by habit and experience with a vast store of thought,

has neither been induced by taste, nor compelled by necessity, into learning how to weave it all into expression, till the very accumulation of the material conjoined with unfamiliarity with the instruments have made the lesson doubly difficult for him to learn. Such, withal, was now the lot of Mortimer Dyneley.

It was perfectly true, as stated by De Saintfront, that Mortimer had once or twice remarked the coming and going of Marian, and the aid rendered by her out-of-doors to her father; but, to tell the truth, though he had been momentarily struck by the pleasing sight of her tender attention, it was more the father's lameness than the daughter's devotion which had attracted him. A horse, a donkey, or a dog had only to limp to provoke his notice now. Their outward and visible state was so accurate a representation of his inner state, that he could not but for sympathy's sake just have a look at them. The poor old soldier had seemed to him so sorely crippled, that he had positively thought of the sufferer as 'a friend and a brother,' and had offered his arm on seeing De Saintfront in the rain and the lurch, as naturally as if he approached an

old acquaintance. If few knew better how to offer a courtesy than Mortimer Dyneley, none knew better how to accept one than Gustave De Saint-front. A *revue* in one of the Paris journals which the latter had been reading afforded a ready topic of discourse ; and as the former was obliged, in the absence of Marian, to see him into his house, and indeed into his chair, lingering in the room for twenty minutes or so was but a natural consequence. Indeed, Mortimer found himself, for the first time for months, paying close attention to what was said to him ; and on accepting the offer, at departing, of the *Revue* in question, he promised with pleasure shortly to return it in person. As for Marian, though he had seen her perhaps often, and noticed her in her filial ministrings certainly on two occasions, he should not have known her from the young woman at the counter of the *Café*. There was but one female face in the whole of Caen that he could have sworn to, and that was Jeanette's. Three or four old women, whom he tried to help in his small way, he might have guessed by their voices or their kirtles, but that was about all.

So that though, in his second conversation with

De Saintfront, on the occasion of returning the borrowed newspaper, the agreeable impression produced upon him by the first was not only confirmed but strengthened, and hence led to interchange of names and acknowledged acquaintance, Mortimer had still taken so little notice of Marian that he was but very vaguely conscious that she had at least an uncommon fair face. And when this fact, sufficiently noticeable on the very surface by an ordinary observer, ended by at last forcing itself upon his attention, it remained a dead barren fact and nothing more. His education and habits had been such that it required no effort for him to be courteous and considerate towards women ; indeed, he would have required the exercise of no small effort in order to be otherwise : and Marian was not excepted from the benefit of his chivalrous social regard. But into his manner towards her there did not enter the faintest demeanour of gallantry. Even in his deference to her, he appeared deferential to her years or to her weakness, rather than to her sex. He was never officious, much less complaisant. Her presence did not in the least distract, as presence so pleasing could not have failed in the

departed days to distract him, from masculine conversation. Indeed, he treated her precisely as her father treated her, minus the parental tenderness which her father, on fitting occasions, displayed. But the two men would talk by the hour together, she sitting by—working and listening. She always seemed quietly attentive. The only remark she had ever made at the end of their discussions was that she did not quite understand them ; and as she said this but twice, it might be inferred that on every other occasion she did : and indeed there was no reason why she should not. She was by disposition and culture so shy and retiring, that silence seemed, under the circumstances, her natural attitude. But the silence of really silent women is a very strange thing.

On occasions, of course, she was not with them ; and on one of these, Mortimer—not from garrulosity truly, but rather in defence or explanation of some opinion for which he was contending—gave De Saintfront an outline of his own recent history. The Frenchman, who had no reason for reticence, and who, by virtue of his years, had more right, and perhaps more inclination, to talk about himself,

had long ago frankly described his own career to Mortimer. When, with some little difficulty, the younger man had paid the debt of narration, which he had ever since felt to himself that he owed, De Saintfront, though deeply enough interested, found very little to say, by way of comment at least, to the subject of the lamentable story ; but, nowise bound to secrecy—what was there to hide?—he repeated it to Marian, who thought and said, that, in all her *Contes* or *Nouvellettes*, she had never read anything so shocking or so sad. Between father and daughter it became a constant topic of conversation ; though in Mortimer's presence it was never even alluded to. Of late, father and daughter had had no existences but their own, in which to be personally interested : now there was a third existence. To the father he was a companion ; to the daughter, half a dream, half a romance.

It is never very safe for a woman to indulge in excessive pity for a man who still possesses something that women will never be induced to consider as altogether a misfortune. In spite of the proverb, there is very little contempt in the female pity at least, that pours itself over the miseries of a man

who is still young, and who still ought to be strong. Even should he have been wicked, if his wickedness have but brought him to grief, I think they had better imitate the Levite and pass on. If they do not, they may have a bigger bill to pay at the hostelry than they think for. I speak of women—grown-up women who know as much as they are ever likely to know, and yet, after the fashion of their sex, remain for all their knowledge pretty nigh as sentimental as ever. Even these had much better not have compassion upon the ill-treated wayfarer, unless the thieves have fairly beggared and crippled him for life. But if this be a sound admonition to matron, might it not—were it possible—be extended as a positive injunction to maid?

Alas! there is no such possible. The young heart takes mighty little heed of sermons, and of commandments none whatever. Marian's young heart could go its own way without being uselessly pestered by either. Even if her father had been of that rare paternal humour which disports itself in lectures, she would never have given him the opportunity of indulging it; but he was not. And when, in the simplest manner, she, sitting on his

knee with her arm round his neck, would reiterate over and over again, how much she wished she could do something for Mr. Dyneley, something to make his fare less hard and his eyes more light-some,—how she would sacrifice this, that, and the other, everything indeed to make him forget what he evidently remembered far too retentively, De Saintfront could but kiss her for her gentle little soul, and assure her that a much less tender and older personage than herself, no other than Time, would do more for the poor fellow than ever she could. But she would help Time ; why should she not ? And then she went on naïvely to confess that, though she had never done so before, she had been irresistibly impelled thereto at length.

‘To do what?’ he asked.

‘To pray to the Madonna for him.’

‘Quite right, my child. She must be very different from what I should imagine her to be, if she does not listen to *you*.’

‘I never did it before, papa dear, because I know mamma never did it ; but I think she would have done it, if she had been in very great trouble. All the other girls do it. Everybody does it. I only

ask her to pray for him just as I do ; more effectually of course. At least I hope so. You know in the Litany there is one part, where it says to her, " Comfort of the Afflicted, pray for us ! " Well, I like that best, and I say that for him ; and I really think he is a little better.'

Without at all entering into the larger and here unnecessary question whether he *could* be any better for Marian's gentle impetrations, I am forced as an honest biographer to say that I fear he was not any better for them as yet ; and in continuance of my honest task, I am further compelled to state that the person most affected by them was no other than Marian herself. In what way, it would be premature to attempt to describe, since most certainly she could not have described it herself.

But the months went very quietly with the good folks of Caen, and with none more quietly than with the only people in it with whom we have as yet to deal, till about the end of July. The 15th of August, the National Religious Fête, was approaching ; and to this Marian was looking forward with mixed anticipations. The ecclesiastical ceremonies, sure to be grand and imposing, were a

pleasure upon which she could naturally and properly count; and she had informed her papa that, as it was a great feast of the Blessed Virgin, she felt convinced that something important could be done on it for their friend. Mortimer had promised to accompany her to Saint-Etienne, and both fully calculated upon her father going with them. With the addition of Mortimer's assistance, he thought he might venture into the crowd. With no pleasures beyond those of her daily duties and occupations, Marian had for weeks dwelt upon the approaching holiday with feelings simple almost as those of a child, but not unworthy of the sympathy of a man. Judge of her disappointment when Mortimer, addressing himself to her more directly than he had ever addressed himself before, and with a look of interest in his face that she had never hitherto seen in it, announced to her, with every expression of grief, that he was obliged to go at once to England. To-day was the 11th. There was not a chance of his being back for the 15th. It was a bitter mortification to poor Marian. Could she only have got him once with her to service at the cathedral (he went often enough by himself),

he might go with her again, and again, and again. He would thus have something more to occupy his attention. The opportunity was to be lost. She could never ask him to go; she could not, for her little life, have asked him. She had not asked him to go on the 15th; it was he who had made the proposition (knowing it would please her, of course), and he might never make it again. And now too, he being absent, her father could not venture into the crowded church. Outwardly even, she could not help manifesting her disappointment; but the outward show was nothing to the inward feeling. She had but one consolation. Perhaps he could be prayed for in his absence more earnestly than if he were inclining at her side.

Mortimer would not have gone, could he have avoided or postponed going; but he had received a peremptory letter from the house-agent in whose hands he had left the letting of Gracewood, which said that there was at last a probability, indeed a certainty, of having a good tenant at the rent for which he had stood out. But the gentleman who was anxious to take it was an old-fashioned fellow, who would deal with none but principals,

and with them only in person. He had been down to the cottage, liked it vastly, and thought the price perfectly reasonable. He should be in London till the 14th; where he should be after that, he could not say. It was very absurd; but Gracewood had been empty now nearly a year, and poor Mortimer sorely wanted to see himself sure of seventy pounds per annum at any rate. So far he had been living upon his capital, which, small to begin with, had now dropped below thirty pounds. Indeed, he was beginning to feel extremely anxious. Go he must, though the very journey would be an additional expense. His route would be the long and cheap one from Hâvre. They saw him off from the quay down the river, looking after him with lingering kindness.

‘He does not seem as sorry to leave us as we are for him to go,’ said Marian.

‘How can we expect him to be very sorry about anything, darling? It will be a long time before it much matters to him whether and where he goes or stays.’

Whereat Marian for a time was silent. When she did speak, it was to upbraid the shallow heart

that, as far as she was capable of understanding the matter, had deserted him. It is a terrible thing for a woman who has failed in love's fidelity to fall into the hands of her own sex. It is the fashion to call women illogical. If by logic be principally meant—and I can attach to it no other leading meaning—the operation by which the mind arrives at just conclusions, I can only say, that women either exercise it as skilfully as men, or possess some other instrument by virtue of which they contrive to do at least as well without as men do with it. But there is one question in which they are not only always illogical, but nearly always wrong; and strange to say, it is one of the few questions on which they are likely to be well informed. Marian was arguing this precise question, and could neither devise nor comprehend any motive by which Isabelle Chesteron could be justified in her conduct towards Mortimer Dyneley. Certainly, her unsophisticated nature gave her fewer data for forming an estimate than are in the possession of women, who are nevertheless on kindred occasions quite as severe as herself. She could just understand loving a man, and continuing to love him till life and light went out of

her eyes, and there was an end. Without flinching, without change. Or if change were to be contemplated, it would occur when difficulties waxed tight and terrible. Then there might be a change; but it would be a change from intense love to intenser. Anything else than this was beyond the scope of her comprehension. Under so simple yet absolute a law as this, no wonder that Isabelle Chesterton fared badly, and was regarded and spoken of as the outcast of womankind. De Saintfront listened to those brave maidenly convictions, suggesting this possible palliation, and that unsolved perplexity; but in vain. In Mortimer's absence, however, when they talked, they talked of very little else.

He meanwhile had crossed the Channel, and stood unwillingly once more upon his native soil. To have so soon to return, though even for the briefest visit, to a land and even to scenes which he had perforce and yet impenitently quitted, seemed to him a sort of humiliation. He felt as if, in flinging behind him the places where he had once hoped to play so splendid, but had ended in playing so sorry, a part, he had half, if not wholly, recovered his beloved dignity. He had been justly punished

for clutching at so much ; he had striven to set himself right by renouncing all. In leaving the land of his birth, he was no more than Regulus, *tendens Venafranos in agros* ; but, like Regulus, he had departed as calmly as if he were. But he had intended the exile to be permanent, not spasmodic. This going back was unfitting. The want of seventy pounds a-year, however, made it necessary. It was the old story ; the original conflict continued in a smaller way between theory and facts. The major premiss of his life was again being roughly tested. The Artist had not escaped from the proof.

He had not had time to admonish Bracebridge of his coming ; but on reaching London Bridge, he went straight to Bracebridge's chambers. His friend was at home, and as much delighted as amazed to see him. The explanation of the reason for his journey was, however, disappointing. Guy, on seeing him, had imagined that something good had turned up ; for he had not yet rid himself of the notion, once held with some justification, that Mortimer was an uncommon lucky fellow.

'It's no use !' he said, on having his supposition rudely shattered, 'It's no use !' When Fortune

once begins to treat a fellow badly, she seems to take a pleasure in it—a pleasure in it. She must have had a deal of fun out of me, in that case—a deal of fun. However, she's quite welcome to it—quite. I've got accustomed to it now—thoroughly accustomed to it.'

'Perhaps she will get tired of it, if *you* do not,' said Mortimer, following his friend's humour.

'She may. May, I say; but it's not probable. But now that you have come over, you will stop a little. There's a bedroom here for you—a devilish bad one, but a bedroom—as long as ever you like.'

'Thanks, old boy! but I shall be off again as soon as ever I can. I hope to see this old fellow to-morrow; and if I do, I shall take the first steamer back.'

'You've never sent me anything. Have you altered your mind?'

'No; but I have written nothing that satisfies me.'

'Oh, what's that!' exclaimed Bracebridge, who did his work as well as he could, but never troubled himself about it when it was done, except to get

paid for it. 'It's all a matter of chance.' Bracebridge always talked as though he believed in no causes, physical, efficient, or final; but only in chance, luck, fortune, and so on. 'It's all a matter of chance whether you get inserted or not. There is one thing it certainly does not depend on, and that is its goodness or badness. Oh, all chance.'

Mortimer was not able to credit this doctrine; but even had he been able, he would not any the less have objected to seeking anybody else's literary approval until he had obtained his own. It was not necessary, however, to argue such a point with Bracebridge; so he only answered,

'Well, when I have anything to send, I will do so; and I am sure you will do your best for me.'

'That I will . . . Have you heard anything—?' He paused significantly.

'Not a word; and I do not wish to hear . . . How is Horncastle?'

'Heaven knows! Heaven knows how Horncastle is, I don't. He still keeps on his rooms here; but he has got a little house—a cottage, or indeed a hut—down at Richmond, and he is always there.

He doesn't tell me he has it; but I know he has, of course I know. Yes, and I know where it is too. And everybody knows, or *will* know. Will know. Horncastle's a devilish clever fellow, but he's a great fool in some things; and he's a great fool in that. He has his wife down there. Fellows say that she isn't his wife, but I know if she isn't his wife. Of course I know.'

'What could have made him marry her? It is an additional expense to him.'

'Is it, though? Not a bit of it. She has saved him many a twenty pound, and many a bother too. Why, when he was always here, she used to market for him, yes and cook for him. Cook for him; and do other things for him, I've no doubt, which you've never had to do, but which I have, and did only yesterday, for that matter: tackle the pawnbroker, sir! Yes, and keep off duns. Ah! she's saved him many a pound. He's no fool, nor she either.'

And Bracebridge closed his lips tight and looked awfully wise, as though he knew all about it, 'yes, and a good deal more.'

'I should like to see him.'

'You'll be very clever, if you do.'

‘Won’t he be at the House to-morrow?’

‘It doesn’t sit.’

‘Ha, I forgot. Are you sure we shall not find him in his rooms?’

Quite : though we will try, if you like.’

‘They tried ; but, in this instance, Bracebridge was a true prophet. He then described the exact situation of Horncastle’s house at Richmond, such as it had been described to himself by some one who had ferreted it out. In reality, it was absurd to suppose that Horncastle was in the strict sense of the word, hiding there. No doubt, and naturally enough, he was glad to have a retreat not known to everybody ; and in not telling ‘leaky’ Guy, he was not unwise. But as, after all, usually happens on such occasions, Guy had come to be correctly informed of its locality.

‘I should very much like to see him ; and if I can get my business done to-morrow in time for me to run down, I will.’

‘You will return to town and sleep here again?’

‘Thanks. With pleasure.’

The old gentleman who wished to rent Gracewood was quite as peculiar as Mortimer had been

led to expect ; and with him was an old lady, his wife, of a similar complexion. Two hours were occupied in arriving at a conclusion of the arrangements for a lease from year to year, though neither the amount of rent nor any other condition was quarrelled with. Mortimer would never have endured two such hours in the grand days of old. He was very patient now, and had his reward in securing an excellent tenant, and one who insisted on always paying half-a-year's rent in advance. This he paid on the spot. And Mortimer departed with 65*l.* pounds in his pocket and an easier mind ; having also the first good laugh to himself (at the old gentleman's oddity) that he had enjoyed for a long time. He lunched, and shortly after started off for Richmond.

The house he sought was very difficult to find, though Bracebridge's description enabled him to arrive at the whereabouts with ease. This was where the long-stretching slope from Richmond Terrace ends considerably to the left, and at some little distance from the river. It was judiciously chosen for seclusion, though in no sense lonely. The house itself was the funniest little box ima-

ginable. It consisted of one small story, even the tops of the windows of the ground-floor being invisible over or through the black tarred paling. There was a tiny garden or at least enclosure, well shrubbed but uncared-for, which still further shut in the house. There was a bell-handle inserted in a post in the paling, at which Mortimer tugged vigorously and from which he at last elicited a sound. This being followed by nothing further, he renewed his efforts; and growing perfect by practice, he contrived at last to get a fair amount of ringing out of it. But he got nothing more. Nobody came. He could not well climb over the paling, so he walked round it. Eventually he discovered an entrance at the back; but this led only to a door closed and locked, and a sort of out-house that might be either a stable or a coal-shed. Having vainly tried to shy an envelope, on which he had written his name, through an upper window which was open for about a couple of inches, and having exhausted every other available means of entry, he had to depart with nothing to show for his journey, much mortified and disgusted. He was turning the corner of the front of the paling when a woman,

whose face he seemed to know, ran nearly against him.

‘I beg your pardon, sir!’

‘Not at all. Do you know—’ he noticed as he spoke that the woman was staring hard at him—
‘if Mr. Horncastle lives here?’

‘Yes, sir! I ought to know. Don’t you remember me, Mr. Dyneley?’

The very sound of his own name was disagreeable to him. He looked again, trying to recall the face of the speaker.

‘Oh, of course I do. You were Mr. Horncastle’s laundress in the Temple.’

‘Yes, sir; have seen you there, sir, scores of times.’

‘I suppose so. He is living *here* now?’

‘Partly, sir! He comes here pretty often; but he’s not here now, nor hasn’t been this last week. If you’ll just wait a moment, I’ll get the key, sir.’ He followed her, however, mechanically. ‘I know you’re an old friend of Mr. Horncastle’s, sir, and he’ll be very sorry not to be here. He’s not seen you for a long time, sir! has he?’

‘Not for a very long time. Is he well?’

‘Quite well, sir! He always is. I never see’d such a gentleman for being well.’ She was fiddling at the window of the outhouse, standing tiptoe and pushing back the window. ‘I know you’re an old friend of his, sir. You see as we have to keep the key here, sir. There’s nobody on the place but me, and I can’t always be here. And Mr. Horncastle comes at such odd times, late o’nights and early o’mornings, and when one can’t tell he’s a’coming. So that we’re *obliged* to keep the key—*now* I’ve got it: that’s it’—and she pushed back the window again—‘to keep the key here.’

‘Just so,’ said Mortimer; ‘I know he is not very regular in his hours. He cannot well be.’

‘He cannot be, as you say, sir; it ain’t to be expected. But I think it’s quite safe keeping the key there. Nobody ’ud be likely to think of finding it there.’

‘Quite safe, I should think.’

‘So he says, sir; and so I say. And there wouldn’t be much for anybody to take, if they did get in.’ And as she spoke, she turned the lock of the back-door, and Mortimer entered.

The one sitting room was very small, and but in-

differently furnished. Untidy of course it was ; but it was not that mere litter of letters, pamphlets, and papers, such as he remembered the larger apartment in the Temple. Probably giving nobody the address of the cottage, Horncastle never received in the country those voluminous documents which were the disorderly but principal furniture of his abode in town. Three or four coloured prints of the Scotch lakes broke the wall. In the centre of the room was a small round table ; at the end, a comfortable sofa ; in the window, a wire flower-stand, in which, however, were only pots of not sufficiently cared-for mignonette. Three cane-bottomed chairs completed the list of furniture, unless some books piled up in a corner should be enumerated. It was, withal, impossible not to allow that the room was pretty, or at least momentarily created on the eye a pleasing effect. Its shape was good, and the colouring of the walls a very pale blue. Though the muslin curtains were of rather a coarse texture and not a little crumpled, there they were however ; and through and between them was a glimpse of pleasant contiguous greenery, bright in the afternoon sun and just swaying in the afternoon wind. How

pretty I could make it ! was Mortimer's instantaneous reflection.

‘ You don't know, then, when Mr. Horncastle is likely to be here ? ’

‘ Really, I don't sir : I wish I did. ’

‘ All you can do, then, is to tell him that I have been here, that I came down from London on purpose, and that I am immensely disappointed to miss seeing him. ’

‘ I'll tell him that, sir, when he comes. Would you like to go up stairs and see the house ? I know you're an old friend of his, sir ! It's very small, but it's comfortable. ’

Mortimer had naturally no curiosity in the matter, but might, under ordinary circumstances, have gratified her by allowing her the unusual luxury of ‘ showing him over. ’ To no one else probably would she have made the offer. He remembered, however, that Horncastle had never so much as mentioned the existence of the cottage to him, though perhaps lack of intercourse between them was the only cause. Still he never had mentioned it ; and that he came down here half, if not wholly, for the purpose of keeping himself or somebody else out of

sight, was evident, quite independently of Bracebridge's corroborative testimony. Mortimer thought therefore that he had gone quite far enough in coming to the cottage at all. Nothing would have induced him to do that much, but an intense desire to see the man with whom, of all men, he had been most familiar and affectionate. He therefore thanked the servant, and said he feared he must be going. As his eyes wandered round the room in a last look, a feeling of unmitigated sadness came over him, thinking, as at the moment he was forced to think, of the wonderful bright intercourse which once had held them together, and which was all but wholly broken. He remembered his friend's proud boast that they together would leave their footprints on the Capitol. He at least should never mount the Hill of Triumph. And how was Horncastle faring alone on that dangerous journey? He plucked a piece of mignonette, tipped the woman for old days' sake, and departed.

CHAPTER III.

For the last week it had been settled harvest weather. There had been a succession of those steadily sultry autumn days, when the near prospect is so bright and the far one so dim, in which the leaves receive their first imperceptible touch of brown, and the corn its final perceptible tinge of gold. The woods are slowly and but somewhat sobered, but the fields are suddenly and intensely glorified. Garden lawns show white-brown patches, for all the waterer's care ; but the beds are all on fire with flowers glad and glaring in the heat. Sunshades are down, deep down, at every house. And even the housewives of English road-side cottages come out, Italian fashion, upon doorsteps, and suckle their children in the sun. How terrible in the dust ! How exquisite elsewhere !

This afternoon it almost seemed as if there were

about to be a change in the sky. There was a light air ever and anon astir; the distant haze appeared to be breaking up, and a white nebulous cloud or two showed in the heavens. Mortimer was already rather hot and tired, but was hastening his steps in the hope of catching a 6.40 train to London. He had left Horncastle's cottage some seven or eight minutes ago, and was now under an irregular clump of umbrageous limes and thinking of Marian, who would probably at that moment—to-day it was the 15th—be making her simple toilette before going off to Saint-Etienne. Poor girl! She would have to go alone. It was the first time he had ever thought of her tenderly. He was really sorry for her young disappointment. He wished he were with her. So meditating, he scarce noticed that a woman was sitting, with her back turned towards him, on a bench in front; nor yet that, as he drew nearer and his step necessarily grew audible to her, she just turned sufficiently to become aware that it was a man who approached, and then rose and walked a few paces forwards. Neither, when he came up to her, did either hair or fall of shoulder succeed in stirring his paralyzed curiosity. He

passed her as though she were the mere seat from which she had risen. But when, just as he had passed, a sudden, sharp, audible catching of the breath smote his ear, he turned at once involuntarily, and exclaimed, with lips of amaze—

‘ Isabelle !’

Quickly, however, he recovered himself from the surprise, raised his hat, and added, quietly—

‘ Pardon me, Mrs. Dyneley !’

One hand was on her side, the other raised and fixed as if in alarm. This, however, she soon outstretched to Mortimer, saying at the same time, with lips still pale and accents tremulous—

‘ You are well, I hope, Mr. Dyneley? and—happy?’

He did not notice that she had offered her hand, which unaccepted she let fall to her side. He was staring into her face, as though he wished to find some mark by which he could declare it not to be hers. Alas! with all the alteration, those were still the eyes, those still the golden tresses, those still the lips and chin of Isabelle of the Chase.

‘ I am well,’ he said, ‘ I thank you. But if you ask me, really caring to know, if I am happy, I

declare the phrase is almost one I scarcely understand. Am I happy? Perhaps I shall know better what you mean if you answer me—Are *you*?’

‘I think I told you once that the question of happiness could never enter into my life, except so far as the performance of duty could introduce it.’

‘Duty!’ he exclaimed. ‘I am weary of the word. I rarely hear it prated of till the reason has been outraged. Why will women persist in suborning their consciences to blacken the reputation of their understandings? Is the heart nothing? Are feminine instincts serpents’ lies, prompting but forbidden fruit? Duty to what? duty to whom? People desolate a world, and then trump up a still small voice to justify the ruin. Tell me that you pleased yourself, and I shall be able to believe you, and quite unable to rebuke you. Tell me that life is very perplexing, and I shall be the first to frame for you excuses. By my honour, I declare that I have so far never even arraigned you! But accuse yourself once more by the defence of duty, and I shall forthwith condemn you unheard.’

The long black lashes of her deep-blue eyes had curled upwards as he commenced. As he

went on bitterly speaking, they neither drooped nor trembled. She looked from under them straight out at him, her cheeks as pale as the convolvuluses in the hedgerow, the regular white teeth trembling between the parted and suspended lips. But as the hard words ceased, the lashes closed over the eyes, half in pain, half imploringly. He marked it, and added less bitterly,

‘Yet what right have I to judge you at all? Why did you start at my presence? Why thus unhappily make me cognizant of yours? The words in Alwoodley were the best last words to have to remember. I have said too much. Do not imitate my weak example. Pardon me if I was harsh. May God do the best for you. I will go.’

‘No! no!’ she exclaimed, starting forward as he turned away. ‘Mortimer! Mortimer! you *must* hear me now, even if hearing, you condemn.’ Perforce, he turned again and stood. ‘But I pray you, do not turn accuser till you have exhausted the functions of a judge. Why do you talk of my suborning conscience—*I* who am not even prepared with, indeed I who never thought that I should be

called upon for a defence? I thought that I had the right rather to impeach than to be impeached; though, believe me, I never intended to use my privilege. And if I blunder in excuses which are entirely unconsidered, their value—so they be worth anything—may well be stretched in my favour.’

She was speaking so warmly, so earnestly, that he could not now reproach her with affectation.

‘I told you,’ she went on—‘I warned you, as I say, that happiness was neither the quest nor the possible condition of my existence; but that regard for the feelings of others, joined to some sense—pray leave me the consoling word—some sense of duty, was the best chance and outlook for my life.’

‘You told me—(if that be all)—you told me—luckless that I was to believe it—that you would never marry whom you did not love.’ She covered her face and trembled violently. ‘Nay, I am to blame,’ he went on. ‘Pardon me if I seemed hastily to assume that you do not love whom you married. In such wild talk as this, I cannot—you cannot—be sure what either may say. Again, Mrs. Dyneley, I tell you; it had much better not

be held. I have no right to an explanation, and you do not require one.'

She seized him by the arm and held him there for the moment. He yielded to her whim, and she released her hold.

'But I require to *give* one—*must* give one, after the words you have uttered. Do you think I have forgotten my own, brought against me truly enough, that I would never marry whom I did not love? Do you really think I have forgotten them? They were too sincere and thorough at the time, not to be distinctly remembered now. But ah! how little I knew! I had probed my own heart, put to it every by me conceivable question, and got everyone answered. I fancied that I was equipped to face all possible perplexities of the future. But what social or even other experiences had I had to enable me to conjure up invisible contingencies? (I speak not of the present moment; I speak of now all but a year ago. And I still confide in you too much to fear lest you should try to take a momentary advantage of my confession.) What experience had I had, I ask, to warn me when I said that I would never marry whom I did not love, that there

was such a contingency as the *duty* of marrying whom I did not love in order to save him whom I did? That I loved you then, I told you at the time, and therefore need neither blush now to repeat, nor now affect to deny. That I saved you, is the beginning and end of my defence. Perhaps now, Mortimer, you will allow, that the conscience and the heart, woman's instincts and her understanding, duty and love, were not in my behaviour wholly dissevered.'

She clasped her hands and held them low, as if she awaited judgment. He answered, coldly—

'Your last words, if I understand them rightly, are but a detailed exposition of the motives of which your first were an epitome. Duty is still your defence, try to combine it as you will with other unwilling and contradictory witnesses. But some of your words I certainly do *not* understand. You have quickly learned, Mrs. Dyneley, the privileged tone of a married woman. Our position is marvelously inverted since we were last together; and you inform me with accents which I cannot deny to be natural, even while I find them strange, that you have saved me. I really do not know what you

mean. As an assertion, I cannot even allow it to be true. And were it to the full as true as you seem to consider it, I should still be unable—since you insist upon being judged—to see in it the slightest defence. Certainly I once asked for your love, and you painfully remind me that you once gave it me. Your right to withdraw it I will not contest for a moment; but, if you argued for ever, you would fail to convince me that you had any right, without my consent, to substitute for it your patronage — especially the dutiful patronage of Isabelle Dyneley, for the uncalculating love of Isabelle Chesterton.'

'You press me bitterly hard,' she said, meekly—oh! so meekly! 'but I will not be an outcast from your esteem, for want of words. Choose your own, but they are scarcely just. I did not so much substitute interest (I cannot accept your phrase of "patronage") for affection, as transform love into sacrifice. In the transformation, sufficient of the original feeling survived, and still survives, to have satisfied, I should have thought, a man I once deemed so noble yet right-judging as Mortimer Dyneley.'

Both by speech and gesticulation he manifested his growing impatience.

‘You talk in riddles. What means all this language about interest, saving, and transformation? Tell me plainly, What have you sacrificed? what have I gained?’

‘Forgive me if I cannot—you surely would not press me to—describe exactly in words what I have sacrificed. If you cannot imagine it, you must either have come to disbelieve me utterly, or to disparage what you once did not rate, and were justified in not rating as of little value; either you have come to think very meanly of me, or very meanly of yourself. But in naming your present gain, I almost imply my past sacrifice. *You* have gained freedom and a position.’

‘That I am—at last, thank Heaven!—perfectly free, is true; and that in one sense I owe it to you—though in no sense that I should have expected you to pride yourself upon—is equally true. But that you should not only pride yourself, but congratulate me, on my position—though *I* may be perfectly contented with it—is the greatest puzzle of all. I make no complaint; indeed, I think that

of all the kind things for which we ought humbly to thank Heaven, for none ought we to be so grateful as for the *amari aliquid*, the sweet something bitter which flavours life.'

She looked at him (he noticed it himself) with the old look of admiration that had first lured him to his destruction. Her unuttered approval had been as dangerous to him as his uttered eloquence had been to her. Was the old charm working?

'For what bitter has been sent to me, I strive to be duly and honestly grateful; but I see no reason why my gratitude to Heaven for the blow should extend particularly to you, its instrument.'

'I its instrument? What blow? What bitterness? except such as was common to us both. You accepted your share; I, mine. I endured a further one, in order to save to you what you still possess—room for your grand abilities, and money so necessary to your career.'

'Of grand abilities I know nothing,' he answered rapidly, 'but if at last I understand you aright, and you talk of opportunities and money, you surely know that you see before you an exile and a beggar.'

‘I have *not* saved you?’ she shrieked piteously. ‘They told me—they told me that I could save you—that I alone could save you. I did it to save you—I did all to save you. Mortimer—Mortimer—tell me—tell me quickly—why—why are you exiled and beggared?’

‘Because,’ he answered sadly, slowly, and solemnly, ‘because I would not accept a bribe—any more than I would accept bare life—from the hands which took you from me.’

She tottered backwards, groping blindly for the bench on to which she fell. He saw that she had not fainted, so stood unofficial and silent at her side. At last he said—

‘And you really thought that I consented to abandon—to betray you (there is no other word)—to betray you for—for *money*?’

‘Not—not quite that; but that—that your career—your public utility might not be destroyed. I believed that you had before you a glorious, a beneficent future. I alone stood straight in your path; how could I selfishly remain there?—*I*, who had said that I loved you?’

He raised his hat, and let it fall with his

hand to his side, dropping his head low upon his breast.

‘Forgive me, Mrs. Dyneley. I recall all my words. They were unjust, because they were blind. Still deem it not an additional aggression if I am yet compelled to wonder and to ask how, if you really thought all this, you did not despise me. Self-oblivion, blended with affection, was prompting you to give up everything for the sake of another; self-love, excluding affection, was (you supposed) at the same time prompting him to give up you for himself. It is difficult to reduce a paradox to absurdity save by stating another. As far as I can see, the same motive which urged you to save must have forced you to despise me. Tell me if, in addition to other disasters, I have all these months been cursed with your contempt.

‘Never for a single moment,’ she replied. ‘So high did you dwell in my esteem, so completely had I leaned upon your counsel and trusted in your infallibility, that I bowed to your new decision as soon as I believed that I distinctly knew it, without question, much less without reproof. I knew that love was not enough to fill the large abundance

of a true man's energy and life. I wanted you, perhaps; but the big world wanted you also—not more, Mortimer, but with better rights, than I. How were my small requirements to be weighed against its vast ones?' As she spoke, she rose as if in supplication. 'I can plead nothing more; I have exhausted my defence. Do you condemn me still?'

'I cannot; you know I cannot.' His voice had lost all its sternness; indeed, it was tremulous and infirm. 'But would to God you had not erected such fictitious standards of merit, but had deemed me like yourself, loving and human. To the very last—to that bitter last which has been done, and in time at least can never be undone—I remained, despite unceasing efforts to be otherwise, ignorant of what was passing around you; but I declare to you, I never doubted your constancy, anymore than for a single second I ever wavered in mine. Meanwhile, benefits which, as you knew, had long before commenced, I continued to accept, only because I hoped and believed that I should soon be able to extend them to you. Rather should I say, I believed and hoped; for I loved you, Isabelle, with

all the fierce affection of a boy united to all the calm conviction of a man. One moment, I heard of your marriage; the very next, I scattered all those benefits to the winds; and so acquired—' he slowly heaved a deep, audible sigh—' my freedom and—position.'

What was there, then and there, to remind her of hers? What but foul-play and cruelty had intervened to make her forget that she was no longer Isabelle Chesterton? Was there not everything to delude her into the momentary dream that she was again in Alwoodley Chase? The same voice made music in her ears; the same presence made sunlight in the place; the same lofty ideas and glowing words whirled her beyond circumstance and obstruction. He was noble, eloquent, and impassioned as ever; and now—now he was beggared and alone. His tones had shaken with emotion; and though she stood with downcast eyes, she could see his figure trembling. She raised them timidly to his face. His own were swimming with tears. It was more than she could brook. She flung her arms wildly round his neck, and broke into convulsive weeping; while he upon her

golden hair—(her face was hidden in his breast)—rained feverish and forgetful kisses.

A loud thunder-peal awoke them both. The waning heat, the stirring air, the gauzy cloudlets, which Mortimer had remarked and greeted as the harbingers of cooler days, had been but heralds wrongly-read of gathering storm. They had all along been too much absorbed in each other's words to note the deepening gloom; and the shade of the umbrageous limes had seconded their natural neglect. A vivid flash of fork-lightning jaggedly tore up the sky, which closed again and instantaneously sent forth a rattle of fulmination; and straight upon the sound, big black drops commenced to fall. They were in the very heart of the tempest.

‘Quick—quick!’ he said; ‘we must run for it. I can take you to a house which I had quitted only just before I met you.’

‘Is it far? Whose is it?’

‘We shall be there in four or five minutes, if we hurry. It belongs to a friend of mine—to Grattan Horncastle. You remember him?’

‘Yes; but—’

‘He is not there. Nobody is there; only one servant—a female servant. Let us go at once; you will get wet as it is.’

He hurried her along. Both arrived breathless at the cottage. He first rang, and then ran round to the back. The door was locked, and nobody came in answer to the bell. He went to the out-house, pushed back the window, and felt for the key. There it was. The servant had evidently gone out again; she felt it lonely enough, no doubt, and was having tea and gossip with some *commère* in the neighbourhood.

‘She is not here; but I have the key. Oh! how wet you are getting. This is it, I am sure; she opened it before with this. No—yes—there it goes.’

And they entered. Neither was seriously wet; but her hair was dishevelled and her light shawl awry, and herself still terribly out of breath, by the rate at which they had come. With fawning tenderness quite new to him, and with a delight which beamed out of eyes from which all trace of tears had gone, he smoothed her tresses and dashed off the rain-spots, and waited on all her

trivial wants. They were almost laughing now ; she half-hysterically.

‘ We seem fated to meet in showers,’ he said.

‘ Yes ; but this will be no shower. We are going to have a tremendous storm.’

‘ I fear so.’

Had he said, ‘ I hope so,’ he would have more thoroughly expressed his feelings.

‘ But what treachery !’ he exclaimed, resuming a serious tone, and seating himself by her side. ‘ You remember the dinner here at Richmond ?’

‘ Yes. You were to be there. I wondered you did not come.’

‘ I was invited, as you know. But the very day before it, the day (that is) after I last saw you, I received an intimation—I need not say from whom—to go off at once to a place called Drummington. The plea was that one of its members was about to resign. I was to lose no time, but to get the start of anybody else and commence my canvas. Once there, I was kept in it or about it for a fortnight. I could neither avoid going nor remaining ; for the scheme professed to be arranged solely in my interest and was in accordance with the intention,

which I had already told you I entertained, of entering Parliament at the first opportunity. Were you not told of my going to Drummington?’

‘No. As I tell you, I only wondered at your absence from the dinner. I never heard your name mentioned, and I did not myself like to introduce it.’

‘The train was laid pretty early on, then. Well, I was away a fortnight, and to no purpose. I had reason enough, before to-day, to consider my being sent to Drummington as a mere trap, for it ended in nothing. Now, of course, I plainly see it to have been such. Immediately on my return, my efforts were directed to seeing you again. Failing in these, I felt bound to communicate with your father. He made excuses for not being able to see me, and requested me to convey my wishes by writing. I wrote, informing him of my love for you, and demanding his approval.’

‘Great heavens!’ she exclaimed.

‘You did not know this?’

‘Not a syllable.’

‘He—or Mrs. Thatchley rather—then wrote in answer, complaining of our having met in Alwood-

ley Chase, but remarking that, before that or any other question need be discussed, I must satisfy them as to my being in a fit position to marry. They had always understood that my income was a free gift, dependent on another's will ; and such dependence made it too precarious to be relied on. Believing that by accident or negligence only—certainly not by design—my income had been allowed to remain such as a mere spectator might call precarious, though personally I did not so consider it, I wrote at once to the proper quarter, announcing my attachment and my difficulties, and pointing out the simple means by which these last could be removed.'

'When do you say you did that?'

'It must have been about the middle of July ; nearly two months after our parting in Alwoodley Chase. But then, I had ridden over to Beadon three times before that, in the hopes of seeing your father and telling him then what I should have much preferred telling by word of mouth. I had recourse to writing only when I failed in all my efforts to see him or you, and I began to be uncomfortable at the delay that was taking place.

Indeed I grew anxious as to what you would think of my silence.'

'I was thinking nothing,' she said, 'that derogated from the high place on which I had put you. But—go on, and tell me all.'

'Well—as I said—I sought for what I felt sure I should at once obtain—a definite settlement of my position: one such as I could lay before your father, and with which I should remove all difficulties. To my surprise, I was answered with objections, but objections so kindly put and pleaded for so entirely on the ground of my own interests, that I was forced at least to listen to them. Not a syllable was said to make me suspect that there existed any objection beyond, or more permanent than, that which was named. I was reminded that I had as yet done nothing, and requested to prove myself worthy of the confidence and assistance I had received, by thinking for the moment rather of work than of marriage. I then urged my absolute engagement (pardon me! I really thought it such)—'

She pressed his hand, of which she had hold the whole time he spoke, closed her eyes, and trembled visibly.

‘—urged it, but in vain. Still I was refused so kindly, and so induced to consider that the settlement for which, in order to be in a position to satisfy Mr. Chesterton, I had pleaded, was sure to be made in a year or two, that I calmly wrote to that effect; begging that our engagement might be deemed provisional upon the occurrence of that event, and that I might meanwhile be received as a visitor at The Priory on the kind old terms. Did you hear nothing of *this*?’

‘Not a word, not a whisper. What I did hear, I will tell you when you have finished. But, continue.’

‘I have told you nearly all, Isabelle,’ he said, his voice dwindling down from the excitement of narration to the sad tone natural to the narration’s disastrous close. ‘Again Mrs. Thatchley wrote, simply to say that my explanation of my position was as unsatisfactory as my conduct; and that all acquaintance even must be considered as terminated.’

‘Did you not then begin to suspect? Were your eyes even yet not opened?’

‘Not to the very last. I sent a copy of this note

to him who, I thought, might be induced by its perusal at once to place me in a position to render it nugatory ; and I wrote to you—'

' To me ? '

' Yes, to you, under cover of an envelope addressed to your father.'

' I never got—I never heard of—it.'

' I suppose not,' he said, quietly.

' What was in it ? '

' A simple statement that the difficulties which I have just explained to you—difficulties which I then believed to be no deeper than they seemed—kept us apart ; and an assurance, equally simple and equally sincere, that I had full faith withal in you and me and time. I scarcely thought it would be given to you ; but it never entered into my head to doubt but that you necessarily knew pretty accurately how matters really stood.'

' I knew even less than you.'

' I suppose so,' he said again, with the old tone of sad resignation. ' I felt for a moment very much inclined to throw up the cards, and rid myself even then of a dependence which, now hampered with terms, began to gall me. But—' and he

looked intently at her and paused—‘ I thought of you, and I desisted. I rode over to see old Jeff; intending, in my desperation, to trust in him, and ask him to give you a letter, which would set your mind wholly at rest.’

‘ He had been dismissed long before.’

‘ So I then discovered ; or, at least, that he had left the Priory. Immediately after, I received a letter, asking me as a favour to go to Northumberland, to entertain visitors at Sleuthmere. It contained no allusion to the note from Mrs. Thatchley, which I had previously sent for the writer’s inspection. Resolved to bear much for your sake and for the sake of that love—but of that, enough. Suffice it that I went. I was there six weeks. On my return towards the close of September, I found a letter from Coblentz awaiting me, enclosing a cheque for a thousand pounds, and stating that my income would henceforward be double that amount, and that a proper settlement should at once be made. I sang for joy. I wished that distance might instantaneously be destroyed for me, that I might carry my novel good fortune and my old true unswerving love to your feet. Half-an-hour later I

learned that you were married. I wrote 'dishonoured' across the cheque, and returned it. I quitted Gracewood—I quitted England. I am in this last now, only for the purpose of letting the first. I this morning accomplished the object of my visit. To-morrow I should start for Caen, where for seven or eight months I have been quietly living. As I told you at first, I have never even arraigned, and therefore much less have I judged you. I have been trying to recover my balance, rudely shaken now near a year ago. Poverty—unless it be penury—is scarcely an ill, Isabelle. But it has been a terrible thing to have to carry about a heart which must neither speak *nor* break. It has spoken a little at last, but in the quietest language it could find.'

He sate by her side upon the couch, pale and perfectly still. She had listened tearlessly throughout. Now that his voice was gone, her tears came welling up to take its place. Tears, like his words, very quiet, but also, like his words, pitiably sad. The storm had mounted to its height. The lightning flashed with iterated illumination through the slobbered panes. The tonitrant peals rattled, and

rolled round and round. The big black rain came down straight and steadfast still.

‘How shall I tell you?’ she asked. ‘Would that your imagination could supply the gap, and save me the recital; but the little—indeed, the nothing—that *I* guessed of all you have told me, assures me how little you can guess of what I must needs tell you in turn. Jeff was dismissed immediately after our last meeting; but that he was dismissed on account of that meeting, I was not told till long long afterwards. Much less was I as yet given the least ground for suspecting that our interview was known to any beyond ourselves and him. It was but natural that your name should now rise to my lips only when I could not avoid it. It was trying enough to have to hear it on others; but when I heard it, as often occurred, I heard it coupled only with commendation.’

‘With commendation! How could that be?’

‘Ah! brave men like you are almost as little fit for disentangling as for weaving toils. At the very time that the door of the Priory was practically closed against you; when, as you have described, you rode over time after time to meet only with the

answer of "not at home," your praises were being skilfully rung in my ears. Your future was to be as brilliant, it was said, as your present was full of promise. You had splendid abilities, a cultivated mind, a sympathetic nature, boundless ambition, and the prodigally generous support of one whose name, I thank your delicacy, and I will imitate your example, in not uttering. But it soon became evident, from claims which now began to be urged, that praises of you were celebrated only in order to introduce the praises and importance of another. I might be as impressed as much as ever I liked with the sense of your capacity and your prospects, provided that I was at the same time, and by the very same means, impressed with the sense both of your ambition and your dependence. Meanwhile I never saw you, and heard nothing further of you, but that you were starting on a prosperous career, seconded by all that affectionate interest could bestow.'

'Let us avoid names still,' he said; 'we can be sufficiently explicit without them. But tell me, did you see *him* often about that time?'

'Constantly. Why do you ask?'

‘Because I never could succeed either in seeing him, or in discovering his address.’

‘I saw him often. Indeed he was almost always at the Priory itself, and always more or less in the neighbourhood. When claims, long indirectly thrust upon me, assumed at last a definite form, and still you never came, I broke my silence and avowed to my father what had passed between you and me. Then it was—about the middle of July, at the very time it must have been that you were striving in vain to establish your claims—then it was that I was told that I had made a superfluous confession: that our meeting in Alwoodley had been known at the time of its occurrence—’

‘How, I wonder?’

‘(That I have never discovered)—that Jeff had been dismissed for complicity, and was now starving somewhere for what was called his infidelity; that any notion of ever meeting you again, except under altered conditions, must be for ever abandoned; that my conduct had been kindly overlooked and not even alluded to, in the hope that my future behaviour would justify the condonation; that one path alone was now open to me, and that I

must at once resolve sensibly and straightforwardly to pursue it.'

He loosened his hand from hers and strode savagely about the room.

'Heavens! What treachery on treachery! Had I but divined it, I would have carried out the impetuous design I then in hot moments entertained, and carried you off by brute force. Would to God I had done so!'

Again he sate himself down by her side. She did not take his hand again, but laid hers gently upon it as though to calm him.

'At first I positively and distinctly refused to do even so much as listen, and was prepared to encounter and undergo a repetition of all the horrors of my early childhood.'

'Such as I often used to picture you to myself as possibly undergoing. Was the picture right?'

'No: not literally. The horrors of that time, though they even surpassed those of my childhood, were wholly different. I was treated with the greatest and most unswerving external kindness. I was petted and besought. Nothing was commanded. Everything was begged for as a favour. But what

terrible inducements were laid before me! My father's speculations in the company with which he was connected, had turned out lamentably. It became a question whether he would not be utterly ruined, and there was one person only who could save him. I prayed for poor old Jeff. What, it was asked, could my father do for Jeff, now that he himself sorely needed assistance? And then—crowning argument—I was offered two pictures to gaze on, in each of which you were the central figure; but in one, great, honoured, and glorious; in the other, penniless and bitterly struggling. I was left in no manner of doubt. I could save Jeff from the workhouse, my father from insolvency, you from a life of inglorious toil; or I could merge you all in a common ruin. Ignorant of what had really occurred, I was led on to believe, without being told so in words, that you saw the folly and indiscretion of your conduct; that you wisely absented yourself from my presence, and forbore from following up your momentary passion in Alwoodley Chase. You were still on the best terms with him on whom depended your career, and were gladly receiving from him the substantial helps to a splendid and useful life.'

She paused ; for the troubling tears came afresh. He let them rain themselves away, saying nothing as she wept, but looking out from her side through the storm-splashed window-panes, with a great blank miserable stare.

‘ O the nights and days ! ’ she exclaimed, when at last again she stemmed her tears. ‘ O the nights and days spent in that short, suffocating struggle ! I had no voice, as in the sweet woodland time, near me or about me, to solve my perplexities or temper my nerve. Never but once before in my life had I been brought face to face with a difficulty in which I could not, unaided, make out to myself at last which course was wrong and which right. That once, you rode at my side and solved the moral riddle for me ; now, you were the very knot of the riddle itself. It needed but one more touch of dexterity—dexterity which I never saw through till to-day—to make you appear as stepping in to unloose it. You spoke to me just now of your having been asked to go to Sleuthmere.’

‘ Yes.’

‘ Do you remember the letter which you wrote in reply ? ’

‘I remember that I wrote one, consenting to go.’

‘Would that it had contained no more than a bare consent!’

‘What else was there? I forget.’

‘I will tell you. *I* do not forget it; for it finally decided my conduct. On the 14th of August—how I remember that sultry afternoon!—I saw on the drawingroom-table an open note which I took up, thinking that it might be one of mine I had left there. At once I recognized your handwriting. I had not seen you for three months. I did not even know your whereabouts. All the long weeks had you been the very centre and pivot of my thoughts. Here was news from you direct. Perhaps it might enlighten my perplexity. True, it was not addressed to me: it was not mine. But I could not resist the overpowering impulse to read it. I know now that it had been left there on purpose that I should read and be misled by it. Do you not still recall its contents?’

‘No. I quite forget. I fancied it was unimportant.’

‘That it contained your consent to go to Sleuthmere and a promise that you would do your best to

entertain its guests, is true ; but it ended thus :
“ For the rest, confident of the interest you take in my career, I accept your counsel, and trust before very long to dispel all your fears.” ’

‘ And you took that as a proof that I had abandoned you ? ’

‘ I took it as confirming everything else that I had been allowed to see or tricked into believing, which could lead me to conclude that you had judged it necessary, and indeed best, to abandon the quest of the impossible. Do you blame me ? ’

‘ How can I, Isabelle ? ’

‘ As I told you at first, and as I assure you again, I had come to regard you with such confiding soul, to deem you so infallibly just, so instinctively right, that the moment I felt I had intimation of your resolve, I had equal intimation of my duty. Never for a second—I swear to you—did I think of you as abandoning me. I thought of you only as hampered but courageous. I thought of myself as your distant but now determined co-operator. I knew I should not come across you for long. Indeed I hoped I should not. Others, you as well, would understand that Time had best intervene before I

greeted—my cousin. But I never doubted that I should meet you, with your brow encircled and your heart at peace.’

‘But my name—has it never been mentioned?’

‘Never. And the silence was in reality as grateful as I tried to think it delicate.’

She had been unintentionally inadvertent. He caught her up quickly.

‘*Tried* to think it delicate?’ he said rapidly, and somewhat fiercely. ‘Then the treatment you usually meet with is not such as to make you naturally attribute any special forbearance to delicacy? You are not *kindly* treated, then?’

She stretched out her hands imploringly,

‘Please, do not—do not ask me such questions.’

‘But I will,’ he said. ‘Tell me, Isabelle—and truly. Are you not living in London? What brings you here? Why do I see you thus alone? Tell me; I must—I *will* know.’

‘We have the old house in town. But we have one here also. It is only about three-quarters of a mile off. Such a sweet place.’

Did she think, with her praise of it, to lead him off the scent? If she did, she was wholly mistaken

in her expectations. He was too fiercely on the trail to be thus decoyed. She had only given him a fresh means of following it up.

‘If it be so sweet, why are you not there? How is it that I meet you away from it, lonely and in the fields?’

‘I was walking.’

‘Pardon me, but you were sitting.’

‘I was resting.’

‘You needed rest, I dare say,’ he answered significantly. ‘It is no use fencing with my curiosity. I have one right at least over you still, and I will exercise it; the right to know that you are happy. If you are not, your unhappiness must press upon my soul. I shall feel myself the cause, until I remove the consequence. Better, in that case, that I had left you as I found you first.’

‘I was not so happy then that you need rebuke yourself, even if you were to blame—which you are not—for the present.’

‘Then you are not happy now?’

‘Was I ever?’

He could not stop the answer which rose to his lips.

‘On one occasion, I declare I thought you were.’

‘And I was. Oh! how happy!’ And she turned away her eyes, again invaded by tears.

‘But now—*now*,’ he said; ‘I want to know of *now*. Where is he?’

‘He is near.’

‘At home?’

‘Not at this moment.’

‘Where then?’

‘He is dining with—with some friends.’

‘And why are you not with him?’ His questions came terse and rapid. He would not be put off. ‘Is it a bachelor’s dinner?’

‘No; I think not.’

‘You know it is not. Tell me.’

‘Well, it is not. But I did not wish to go to it.’

He stared fixedly at her. She was transparent as a summer stream under his searching eyes. He read in troubled complexion, shifting gaze, and shaking figure, the confirmation of his worst suspicions.

‘You did not *wish* to go to it? You *could not* go to it. Things may be bad; but he could not ask you to go to it.’ He led her, half-shrinking, to

the window, opened it wide upon the still-raging storm, and pointed in the direction of the terrace where the big hotel looked down from its pleasant but tolerant domain. 'He is dining—there!'

'You will not go there?' she said, clutching nervously at his arm, her eyes scared and her head flung back.

He shut the window with a fierce and hasty hand.

'No; I will not go there. I am better where I am.' He led her back to the couch, and sate with horror, rage, and tumultuous infirm purpose, all blended in his intolerable eyes.

'Do not look like that!' she exclaimed piteously. 'I am as—as—happy as I have any right to be; as happy as you are; happier than many others are, or ought to be. We both flew too high, though perhaps it is hard to have fallen so very—very low. How low, I never guessed till now. I had grown, or at least was growing, reconciled to my future, and was impatient only to receive some sure augury of yours. I felt certain I must receive it soon, and was helped to still further reconciliation with myself by believing that when I did receive it, it would

comfort me wholly. I never doubted but that you were making the first silent strides towards the summit where your victory would be also my coronation. After all, even you must not talk of happiness in regard to women and fancy that you know much about it. The truly feminine heart, believe me, is capable of no such other happiness as dwells in the consciousness of having made a fruitful sacrifice.'

'But to have made a barren sacrifice!' he said, in deep, solemn tones; 'to have made a sacrifice—the sacrifice of a life—far more than life—and to have made it in vain—what is *that*?'

'It is terrible,' she answered; 'simply terrible.'

He sprang up from her side, and again paced about the room. The fury of the storm was still unspent. It seemed to go and return; to meet another storm and be rolled back; to charge and charge again in vain. The servant had not returned; would not return, while the sluices of heaven went on pouring down their unremitting—at times it almost seemed, their redoubled—deluge. He strode about the room, muttering

words she did not understand. The human mind plays strange pranks. He was quoting to himself, even at that moment—though with an appropriateness which only he could have felt—the lines about Iphigenia in ‘*Lucretius*.’ At length he paused, silent and with folded arms. If the storm would only cease! If the servant would only come! If—

The words of that Divine Prayer, which we all the earliest learn and the latest forget, have smitten generation after generation, as it will smite generation on generation yet unborn, with a sense of their exquisite beauty! But the supreme fitness of the sequence of its filial requests has perhaps been less regarded. Yet the order of the most consummate rhetorician was never more logical. Infant lips, with but a very dim sense of their softly-lisped prayer, may truly wish, withal, in their little hearts, that a Name may be hallowed and a Kingdom come. Years wax and troubles thicken, and the bread that is not daily given is shocking bad to win. The very seeking of it seems like strife, wherein injuring and injured we forgive, and seem thus to found some claim to be forgiven.

But it is not till later, till so much later, when every other want and perplexity of life have been encountered, that the necessity of the last rogation comes home to us with plenary force, and we pray or sorely stand in need to pray—Lead us not into temptation!

CHAPTER IV.

GUY BRACEBRIDGE had just fallen off into first deep sleep when he was awoke by good stout thumping at his outer door. He hurriedly threw on the first garment that came to hand, and rushed off to open it.

‘I had quite given you up, old boy; or I should have sat up for you. Indeed, I fancy I have not been in bed long, though I was fast asleep.’

‘I am very sorry to have disturbed you, but I could not well be here before.’

‘Why, what time *is* it?’

‘About half-past one,’ said Mortimer, pulling out his watch. ‘Twenty to two exactly. Get into bed again.’

‘Yes; but come into my room, and let us have a talk. Have you only just come from Rich-

mond? But that is impossible: there was no train.'

'No; there was no train. But I have come from Richmond all the same. I have walked.'

'Walked! Well, to tell you the truth, you look as if you had.'

And indeed he did. His boots and trousers bore the marks of long marching through rain-drenched roads. His face was hot, and his hair almost dripping with wet; but, over and above these, for all that as yet he had said but little, he bore the signs of excitement either still subsisting or but recently departed.

'Arn't you awfully thirsty? You'll find some sherry in the next room. Not such as you gave me at Gracewood; but it's pretty decent.'

'Quite as good as anything I have been drinking lately. But have you any beer?'

'Yes. Just wait a moment, and I will get it you?'

'No; don't get up. I can find it.'

'It's in the cupboard just at the end of the passage. Bottled beer, you know.'

'All right: that will do famously.'

He came back with the bottle in his hand, uncorked it, filled a glass, and drained it without drawing breath. Then he refilled, drank again, put down the glass, and said,

‘I have seen her.’

‘Have you?’ said Bracebridge, who was sitting up in the bed, with his dressing-gown drawn across him.

‘Yes—and heard the most awful story of foul-play, you could—or rather, could *not*—conceive.’

‘How did you see her? Did you not go to Horncastle’s? Of course, you did not see *him*?’

‘No; though I went there. I met her quite accidentally. Have you not had a terrific storm here?’

‘Pretty fair, in the early part of the evening. But it has been over these three hours.’

‘So it was, there. It finished about ten o’clock, a little before I started.’

‘Where were you all the time, then?’

‘At Horncastle’s cottage.’

‘Who was there?’

‘Nobody.’

‘You must have had a tiresome time of it.’

‘Not very,’ he answered drily. ‘*She* was with me. We were caught, and took shelter in the cottage.’

‘The devil you did.’

‘Look you, Guy, old fellow ! I am beginning to be tired of triumph all on one side, and suffering all on the other. I am sick of foul money, abetted by the plotting which is so easy to it, riding roughshod over poor intellect and blind honesty. I loved a girl, who loved me in turn, as tenderly and truly as was ever woman loved yet. Believing and justly believing in her loyalty, I set my happiness on winning her. She staked no less. To have lost her by fair means would have been bad enough ; but dignity and common-sense combined would have come to my rescue at last. To have lost her love would but have reconciled me to the loss of whatever else was to have accompanied it. But for her to have given up everything except her love—*that* she could not transfer—in the hope and belief of benefiting me, who, she was lyingly led to suppose, had postponed her to fortune, all the time that she and I, and love and fortune, were being whelmed in a common destruction : this is more than sense

can render tolerable, dignity mitigate, or forgiveness endure. Enough ! I am for righting the balance. Already, thank Heaven ! it is not so one-sided as it was.'

Bracebridge was as much smitten into silence as he had been in Mortimer's own room nearly a year ago, when the first announcement of disaster had come upon his friend. Though a curious, he was essentially a delicate man ; and even when most desiring to know everything, he was never betrayed into an unbecoming question.

'Are you going to remain in England, then ?' he asked.

'No ; I shall go back to Caen to-morrow, the first thing. There is a boat ; but when I shall be over again, I cannot say. Probably, very soon. At last, I think, I shall make use of your services, and put you to no end of trouble.'

'As how ?'

'Only in the way in which you said you would help me. I shall send you over heaps of stuff, and you will do your best with them. By-and-by, I may come over to see to it myself ; but for the present, I know you will not grudge the trouble.'

‘That I shall not.’

‘Though I have never yet availed myself of your kindness, I have in reality been working hard all these last six or seven months. The truth is, I was not satisfied with my work, and so would not send it you ; now I trust I shall reap the benefit of my patience. Lately, I have been writing more to my own satisfaction ; and now indeed, satisfied or not satisfied, I must make some money. I know I shall never make much ; but very little comparatively will do for——Well, I am tired ; and so are you. Good-night, Guy. We’ll have another talk at breakfast.’

‘All right. You’ll find your room quite ready ; and ask me for anything you want. Good-night.’

Mortimer confessed, the next morning, that he had slept but indifferently, and seemed restless and impatient to be gone. Bracebridge said that Horncastle would be terribly disappointed at not seeing him.

‘It cannot be helped. I am sorry too ; but I must go back, this morning. If I do not, there is not another boat for five days. Tell him how sorry

I am to have missed seeing him, and that I did all I could to get at him.'

Bracebridge saw his friend off from London Bridge, and that very evening had—what he had not had for a long time—a visit at his rooms from Horncastle.

'Is Dyneley here?' were the first words as the door was opened.

'He has gone.'

'Gone back!'

'Yes; he went this morning. I saw him off.'

'What a nuisance! I wonder he did not stay, or manage somehow to see me.'

'He did all he could, whilst he was here. We were over at your rooms three or four times; and yesterday afternoon he went down to try and find you.'

'To Richmond?' asked Horncastle, as calmly as though he had made Guy his confidant in the matter of the cottage.

'Yes; but how did you know he was in England?'

'Two men just told me they could swear he passed them in Piccadilly, late last night.'

'No doubt. He was coming from Richmond then.'

‘Then? And by Piccadilly?’

‘Yes; he walked here all the way. He was too late for any return train. What do you think? He was two or three hours at your place.’

‘Oh, during the storm, I suppose. Did he say if my servant was there?’

‘When he first called, she was. Not finding you there, he was walking back to catch the train up to town when—whom do you think he met?’

‘Whom?’

‘Guess.’

‘His cousin?’

‘No; but his cousin’s wife; Isabelle Chesterton that was.’

‘By Jove! You don’t say so.’

‘He did, though. They were caught in the rain, and took refuge in your house. How they got in, I don’t know; for your servant was not there,’ he said, ‘when he went back with Mrs. Dyneley.’

‘Well, and what happened?’

‘He had it all out with her,’ he said; ‘and that she was not in the least to blame. He talked very wildly, both when he got back last night (he slept here, you know) and this morning. But both he

and she seem to have been the victims of the devil's own treachery. And I must say it looked to me as if he was not inclined to stand it any longer.'

'I hope he will not do anything rash.'

'Or that he has not already done it, eh? I know nothing. Indeed I could scarce make out what he said, or at least what he meant—what he meant. Only he seemed in a sort of suppressed rage, and was determined to do something. Something. What, *I* don't know. At any rate, he has gone back to Caen. Gone back, this morning. But it's very funny if he does not mean to do something. Something, at all events. For he said he must make money now. And though I offered, when he first left England, to try and dispose of any manuscript he might send me, he has never yet sent a scrap. But he says he will, now. He will. And if he will, why will he? Of course, I know nothing. Nothing. But it's funny if he doesn't do something.'

'Did he say anything about what he is doing at Caen?'

'Very little. He seems to know nobody, and care to know nobody, there very intimately, but a

retired French officer and his daughter. With them he seems to be very friendly.'

'Is the daughter young?'

'About nineteen or so, I think.'

'Um. All I can say is, I hope he will not do anything foolish.'

'I don't see how he well could. When a fellow has had such a knock-down blow as he has had, he cannot tumble much farther.'

'But he can incapacitate himself from rising again,' answered Horncastle. 'It is a pity he met Mrs. Dyneley. No good can come of it.'

'No *harm* can come of it. Come what may, no one can complain. For it is the most rascally instance of treachery, as far as I understand it, that ever was perpetrated. Egad! I know what I would do if I were served such a turn.'

'Try to run away with her?'

'That or something like it. That, I would.'

Guy Bracebridge's morality, as we already know, was of a rough straightforward sort. At bottom, however, he would probably have shrunk from acting up to the doctrine he had just uttered. Still there are circumstances in which we should readily

forgive, certainly defend, and almost applaud, our friends for doing what we should abstain from doing, ourselves.

‘I hope Mortimer will not, at any rate. I do not yet despair of seeing matters square again between him and old Dyneley.’

‘You may take your oath you will never see that, if you live for ever.’

‘Don’t be too sure. But his being left a couple of hours alone with Mrs. Dyneley is not the way to bring it about.’

‘Quite as good a way as another, *I* think ; since there is no way at all.’

‘Be that as it may, no good can flow either to Mortimer or to her by such an occurrence. I am very glad he has gone away.’

‘He talks of being over again very shortly.’

Horncastle soon saw that he had got all out of ‘leaky’ Guy that that honest, good, unfortunate fellow had to tell. So, after a little meaningless political talk, indulged in out of civility to his companion, Grattan made off to his own rooms. There he found a companion before whom he laid aside all caution and restraint.

‘Have you seen him?’

‘No, Nelly. He left London this morning.’

‘What a pity!’

‘Yes. But what is a greater pity, is that we were not down at Richmond yesterday.’

‘Why?’

‘He went down there.’

‘Down to Richmond! To the cottage, do you mean?’

‘Yes.’

‘How did he know of it? Did you ever tell him?’

‘I never had the chance of telling him, or I dare say I should have done so. One can trust *him* with anything. But how Bracebridge knows, I cannot tell. And when he knows, everybody stands a fair chance of knowing. Of course, you have never said anything about it?’

She looked at him reproachfully.

‘You can trust Mortimer Dyneley. Do you trust me less? Have I not given you every proof that my own feelings are nothing in my eyes compared with your advantage?’

‘Of course you have, old girl! I never doubted you.’

‘What does it matter? A thing of that sort is sure to get out.’

‘Well, never mind. But Mortimer went there twice, and the second time with Mrs. Dyneley.’

‘With Mrs. Dyneley!’

‘Yes: he met her quite accidentally. They had to run for it from the thunderstorm of yesterday; and they stayed at our place till it was over.’

‘They must have stayed a long time.’

‘They did; some two or three hours.’

‘But surely they had not met before, since the marriage? And a meeting between two people one of whom has wronged the other as she has wronged him, could not have been very amicable.’

‘It turns out that she was as much wronged as he. And indeed she was the more deceived of the two, being led to believe that he had given her up to his cousin, in order to secure the continuance of his cousin’s support.’

‘You don’t say so. This only makes our position more difficult, since it renders any reconciliation between him and his cousin more improbable than ever—indeed impossible.’

‘Don’t let us say “impossible.” It renders the reconciliation more difficult to bring about. But I think it may still be managed. The first thing to be done is to prevent Mortimer and her meeting again till the reconciliation be effected.’

‘But, my dear Grattan, how can you prevent that, having no power over either, save through old Dyneley? And to let him know of their having met would only—’

‘Would be madness, of course. Did you ever, Nelly, know me propose anything so stupid as that? Besides, as I have told you all along, Mortimer’s benefit not his injury is my object. You think only of me, and—’ he kissed her lovingly—‘I cannot blame you. But I think both of Mortimer and myself. I will never sacrifice him knowingly even for myself or—don’t be angry Nelly—for you. I want to save us all three. And I will.’

‘You brave old boy! But how are you going to do it? Tell me.’

‘Well, as I say, the first end to be kept in view is the preventing any more such unfortunate meetings as that of yesterday. What occurred at it, I can only guess. I know nothing but what Guy

Bracebridge told me ; and you may be sure he told me what little he knew himself. According to him, Mortimer talked very wildly about her, and left upon his mind the notion of an intention possibly to run away with her. That, I scarcely believe. Quite apart from any other motive which might influence him, he has got barely enough with which to support himself. So that he cannot well do anything at any rate just at present. Still, the sense of the infamous injustice which has been done him, if seconded by her repeated presence, might drive him to desperation. And he is that sort of fellow that, if he took a lead, most women would follow. They could not—I am supposing that they cared for him—well help themselves.'

'I see all that, and quite agree with you about the desirability of preventing their meeting. But we are as far as ever from the means, except the one I mentioned ; and that would not do at all.'

'Patience, Mistress Nelly. As you know, Mortimer is living at Caen. And—as you do not know—his chief, indeed his only friends (all this I learn from Bracebridge), are a retired French officer and his daughter, a girl of about nineteen. We

will suppose—and the supposition is by no means absurd—that she is somewhat fond of him.’

‘ And he of her ? ’

‘ *That* is highly improbable, and not at all necessary. Though, by the way, it also is worth looking after, since it is a possible danger that should be guarded against.’

‘ It would never do for him to marry *her*. ’

‘ I should think not indeed. We should then have seen the very last of him. No. What I propose is this. To act on the supposition—a probable one, I say—that the girl is fond of him, and that her father seconds her affection : and through this supposition, assumed as a fact, to act upon Mrs. Dyneley. Even if it be not true, no harm is done. Indeed, infinite good will be done. Mrs. Dyneley will be saved from further indiscretion, likely to end in worse ; and Mortimer will be again snatched from impending ruin.’

‘ You mean that Mrs. Dyneley must be appealed to, to make a fresh sacrifice, and not to step in between this girl and Mortimer ? ’

‘ Precisely. The effect of this last interview at Richmond must certainly be to awake in both the

old fond feelings, and indeed to intensify them. And nothing short of a determination on Mrs. Dyneley's part to run no further risk, can secure us all against a catastrophe that would be final.'

His companion sat silent for a while, leaning her chin on her hand, and looking thoughtful.

'What think you, Nelly?'

'I was wondering how, even if Mrs. Dyneley should see the necessity of avoiding any further meetings with Mortimer, that would at all promote our further object. He would still go on living the same quiet, useless life. Even if your plan succeed, it will but leave him—and therefore us—where we all three are, and where two out of the three cannot long remain.'

'I shall be very much mistaken if it do not produce more fruitful results than that. At the present moment, he is probably allowing his mind to run on the old thoughts. The buried love is supposed to be alive again, alive with even keener vitality. It would be strange if he were not gloating over the flattering discovery that she, whom he loved so passionately and whom he believed to have abandoned him, loves him still, has loved him all

along, and has consented meanwhile to wear her miserable chains only under the belief that he would so be made entirely free?’

‘ If he permits himself such indulgent reflections as those, depend upon it he will not be long before he tries to reap—at whatever cost—the natural advantages of a love so valuable and so foully betrayed.’

‘ Therefore, all the more necessity for speedy action. Only mark. The more he indulges in such dreams of both affection and vengeance being gratified, the bitterer will be his disappointment, and the deeper his disgust, at seeing the chance of either vanish from his grasp. Then will more practical aims again have a hope of being attended to. When love—startled into fresh and more vigorous life—has, immediately upon such transitory galvanism, to be buried and put away for ever, Ambition will be able to urge its promises of comfort, with far greater likelihood of acceptance, than that it will no longer have a rival. He must be disgusted and disillusioned first. There will be a good chance of his being reasonable afterwards. Failing to punish old Dyneley, he will end by consenting to use him. I declare I think it is a piece of good luck that the

two have met. Only they must not meet again ; at least, not till they can meet with their hearts a little calmer.'

There was silence again for a time. At last, he said, walking slowly about the room—

'By Jove ! something must be done, and very shortly. These fellows are dreadfully tiresome. One can keep the ordinary ruffians at bay ; but the money advanced on the insurances must be paid.'

'But will the Companies not renew them ?'

'Not till I have paid off the money borrowed ; and even then, I shall have to take out new policies.'

'I never understand them. Is it necessary that I should ? I will, if I ought.'

'Not a bit, Nelly. The plain English of it is, that I have borrowed altogether two thousand pounds from Companies with whom I have insured my life for double the amount. And I have not only to pay the premiums every half-year on the policies, but at the same time, to pay off so much of the money advanced as will, in three years from the time of borrowing, extinguish the debt. Two hundred-and-fifty pounds are due now, and—but, never mind ; they must wait : that is all about it. There

is no use in croaking. Let us only get this foolish, rash, dear old boy among us again, and all will be right. I only want time. His name would have been quite enough, without anything more. If he had been here with his two thousand a-year and fine prospects, and such an ally of mine as of course he would have been, they would have accepted his security for everything I owe, been satisfied with reasonable interest, and given me five or six years to set matters straight. Who the deuce could have imagined that he would come such a cropper? But we'll pull him up yet; see if we don't.'

Thus talked, and thus believed, the most sanguine mental dare-devil that never yet knew to fear or faint.

Fainting and fearing, divorced from love, counsel, all that make hearts stout and life tolerable, high up at her boudoir window, sate staring at the moon, she who had once been Isabelle Chesterton. At the extremity of the garden glided on and on the perennial, clear river; and all between, was whatever nature and artifice combined can do for an English garden. Not a shrub shook, not a leaf swerved. The nearest approach to motion was the glistening

of the gravel path. Her bosom heavingly rose and fell with rythmical cadence ; but her lips were tightly closed, and her eyelids fixedly raised. She was in a trance of indefinite wonder.

When, after the few but all-important words, followed by the confirming kiss, in Alwoodley Chase, she had returned to Beadon Priory, and had held concentrated commune with herself, she had come to the definite resolve to go through all known elements of trouble, in order to be finally united to Mortimer Dyneley. Love—conscious love at least—had come upon her with a rush. As she had herself avowed to Mortimer in the Chase, she had hitherto thought of him as something so distant, so different from all else in her experience, that even whilst almost feverishly waiting for his words, and utterly tied to his counsel, she had never for a moment conceived of him then or at any future time as possibly hers. So that when, without a single second's anticipation, she had suddenly heard him pouring out to her fluent syllables of unquestionable love, she had opened her heart spontaneously but unreflectingly to the stream of spoken tenderness which took her so completely by surprise. So

strong a hold had he come to have over her mind, that had he proposed to her some one else's love for acceptance, her first inclination would have almost equally been not to refuse it, however much she might, when left alone, have discovered her error. But when, on reaching home after her ride, and retiring to her room, she arrived in solitude at the full apprehension of what had just been offered and accepted by her, her whole existence leaped and throbbed with the mingled tumult of joy, and of as yet incompletely vanquished incredulity. *He* love her! Impossible. But he *did* love her. He had said in audible words that he loved her. He had pressed his true chivalrous lips upon hers. Her eyes fell on the mirror, and she turned them away, so that she might have her own joy to herself without even herself to see and reprove her for her own blushes. Her life had been so worse than barren; had been so bare, so bitter, so bad to endure, so replete with humiliation, so charged with indignities, that—that—he could not love her. But he did. And the bitterness was gone, and the barrenness over, and the bare should spring into verdure, and she should no more be humbled, and the indignities should be

exchanged for the glories of enlightened love. She should live with him. She would die for him. She would—she did not know. Only, she was his. She was in his hands, and she would do his bidding.

These were chamber raptures, which she must not carry below. In the presence of others, she must demean herself as before. Days passed ; weeks passed ; and he came not. *Another* came. Why should we dwell on it ? Was not her own sad confession to Mortimer but yesterday enough to explain the terrible tortures of the time ? Slowly—slowly—she was forced to let the first confident joy slip away, and replace it by the melancholy conviction that, wise and noble as she still persisted in regarding him, he was human at least in his necessary submission to circumstance. Months passed. He had followed up his rash avowal of love (it *must* have been rash) by silence and absence. All that he did was to stand by whilst another, from whom he had all along received and still continued to receive substantial benefits, aimed at occupying the position which he forewent. Then came the stray letter. It was quite evident that she had calculated on a future too bright ever to be hers.

Still she would not give up the only worship of her life. He might no longer love her. He had committed an error in even fancying that he could. But he had repaired it and gained his old position, in her esteem, of distant superiority. Meanwhile everything concurred to make her acquiesce in his silent but too manifest verdict. A voice was pleading at her side with such earnestness that she may be forgiven if, in her maidenly innocence, she could not distinguish servile passion from manly love. Sensual reprobate all his life, yet never before compelled to seek in marriage such gratification as years and debauchery still left possible to him, old Dyneley urged his suit with the soft dexterity that long habit had made even in age persuasive. Do what he would, he could never have risen before her imagination with the angelic front ; but equally he had hidden from her unmarried vision, the cloven hoof of the demon. To be obedient to Mortimer and save him, to snatch her father from ruin, and keep the roof-tree unshaken over poor old Jeff, were motives sufficient to compel her consent to a union whose horrors she would have been no girl if she could have antici-

pated. There was no pretence of sentimental affection ; and in the end, it was all done in such a blind hurry that she had as little time as wish to analyze her feelings. Avowedly bound but recently to one whom she relinquished only in deference to his and everybody's else judgment, she could not be supposed to enter upon marriage with anything approaching to feelings of love. But little did she imagine that barely a week's experience of it would leave her with nothing short of feelings of loathing. There are some disgusts too intense to be hidden ; and once permitted to be seen, they *must* be repaid with hate. Tying the living to the dead was bad enough, and worthy the rough-and-ready cruelty of ancient times. It was left to the more refined and respectable mercilessness of modern days to tie the living to those who are not dead, but who certainly ought to be. These have still what the utter corpse is without—the will to degrade, or the alternate ability to detest. And it is not too much to say that, within a month of his dexterous triumph, Mr. Dyneley repaid the simple purity of the angel with the complex hate of the fiend.

But if he had the habits and the potency of a devil, he was equally allotted its tortures. He might hate his wife with an intensity possible only to advancing years; but he was as jealous of her as if he loved her with all the wonderful fervour of early ones. He had nothing to fear. Her past protected her even if her present offered her but poor defence, against the perils of a position whose external peculiarity was all that spectators were acquainted with. The real estrangements of married life are but rarely guessed; unfortunately, they are too often told. In this case, the character and behaviour of the husband might somewhat assist divination; but the tongue of the wife would have been torn out before a single word from it would confirm suspicion. Her faultless demeanour, whilst perfectly powerless, as we know faultless demeanour invariably is, to disarm his self-suckled jealousy, aggravated his now ineradicable spite. He hated her only in the sense that people can be said to hate those whom they would give up everything on earth and beyond it to be able and be allowed to love. With feelings such as these, the very sight of her was a punishment to

him; but the sight of her amongst other people was vexation and torture combined. He took a place on the Thames a little above Richmond, so beautiful, that nobody could say Mr. Dyneley did not give his wife everything she wanted. She but too readily seconded his intimation that he intended her to use it as a place of permanent retirement. Was she not missed? it may be asked. Were not tongues curious as to the cause of her singular seclusion? Very few; and those not for long. Genuinely lovely as I have more than once declared her to be, she had not that (so-called) loveliness which a man of any social experience cannot for his life help associating with flower-shows, drives, and ball-rooms, and with nothing else. Neither her manners nor her millinery proclaimed aloud: I am here. Her hair was her own and ingeniously made the least of. Her eyes she turned to the natural purpose of seeing others, not to the artificial one of inducing others to see her. Though she could not conceal, and of course did not think of attempting to conceal the melody of her voice, and could not prevent it from occasionally dropping into a pathetic minor, she indulged it in

no falsetto notes, and never employed it in the service of the 'music of the future.' The man who offered real spade guineas for fourpence in open thoroughfare found no purchasers, though folks were giving a handsome price for gilt buttons round the corner. And though London was as keen then as it is now after what it calls its 'beauties,' it allowed Isabelle Dyneley quietly to retire up the wandering river without attempting to follow her.

Mrs. Thatchley she rarely saw: since now that Mr. Dyneley was in a position to manifest without risk his natural dislike for her, he made up with good interest for all the time during which he had been compelled to conceal it. And as in the temporary alliance which, for the purposes of each, had whilom subsisted between them, he had acquired great respect for her talents as a schemer, he kept her aloof as much as possible from the place where her abilities might no longer be exercised to his benefit. That Mrs. Dyneley should quietly submit to Mrs. Thatchley's ostracism was scarcely strange; but her father she insisted upon having about her whenever it pleased either her or him.

He was now a comparatively broken-down old man. That, as she told Mortimer, he had been involved in financial difficulties from which her husband had somehow saved him, she knew; but how great had been his peril and how severe the terms of safety, she little guessed. She had been handed over without so much as the mention of a settlement; and his liabilities to strangers had been simply transformed into liabilities to Mr. Dyneley. Of late years, the father and daughter had been, externally at least, much estranged. Probably, there had been diminution of affection on neither side; but as the parent had been led to be dissatisfied with the child, the child had ceased to seek or even hope for sympathy from the parent. An estrangement once so created and widened, can never be wholly repaired. She loved him and tended him when he came, and even made believe to be cheerful. But as, when he was not sitting unoccupied and silent, he generally expended himself in laments and self-accusations, occasionally accompanied with the tears of blended age and debility, calling himself an old fool and a poor miserable old fellow, and suchlike melancholy

names, his presence, though it gratified her instinct of filial duty, did but add to her misery and more distinctly indicate the hopelessness of her woe.

From one consideration, however, she obtained comfort ; and one which would not readily occur to the mind. When she finally consented to marry old Mr. Dyneley, she certainly had not promised herself any actual accession of joy from the union. But up to the period of the first apparition of Mortimer at Beadon, and ever since it became certain that he would appear at Beadon no more, her life had been so sterile of positive joy, that anything like the pleasures upon which most of us count in our career, never entered into her calculation of the incidents of existence. What joy really is, she had tasted in Alwoodley Chase and had lived in its lingering titillations during the brief interval which elapsed between that first sweet taste and the renewal of the bitter cup which too swiftly followed. But the interval had been too brief for the mental indulgence of joy to have erected itself into a habit ; and she rapidly swung back into the old and long-acquired custom of

regarding life as a load to be meekly and reverentially borne, not a vine-wreath wherewith to be crowned and intoxicated. So that it was but natural that she should face her married future with feelings not of hope but of at best placid resignation. But though she had not anticipated that it would be heaven, she had certainly not expected it to be hell. She did not think that she was being courted by Hyperion, but she had just as little notion that she was being sacrificed to a satyr. The cultivated submission which had befriended her so long through all her past domestic grievances, was scarcely defence enough with which to encounter her new one. She had been accustomed heretofore to companions old and unsympathetic; but her husband was her first experience of a nature which, besides being that and worse, was also cruel and vindictive. From this discovery arose her consolation.

For how would Mortimer have fared, she ignorantly asked herself, if both he and she had not discreetly given way? Strong in self-will if in nothing else, Mr. Dyneley would never have tolerated his cousin's pretensions in antagonism to his

own. He would have crushed or tried to crush Mortimer as he was now crushing her. If she had now discovered that she had made a sacrifice terribly vaster than she imagined it would be, she was at least consoled by the discovery that the necessity for the sacrifice had also been proportionably greater. Thoroughly made aware after marriage of the old man's selfish, revengeful soul, she saw all the more clearly the perils of social shipwreck from which Mortimer by her sacrifice had been snatched. She had abstained from all mention of his name ever since her marriage; wondering a little meanwhile that it was never even accidentally mentioned in her presence. The only person to whom she could have brought herself spontaneously to mention it, was her father; but she felt that it could give him no pleasure, and would very likely provoke from him but painful tears. Even had she done so, Mr. Chesterton could have given her no information. But she did not doubt but that she would hear of him in time, and such tidings as would compensate her for her griefs. She read the newspapers regularly, with the sole purpose of meeting his name. And whenever there happened to be a

paragraph of Election intelligence, she devoured it greedily in the hope of finding him a candidate for those honours which he had himself declared were his ambition. When he once got his start, she was confident that she would hear or at least read of him, constantly. Slowly but surely, by the measure of his success, her state would be gradually ameliorated. Her life and happiness had, like so much capital, been sunk in a sacrifice the returns for which were not yet visible. But the returns would come, would grow, would repay all the desperate investment, and reward her faith in the generous enterprise. In her heart of hearts she had one wish—a right womanly one, surely; though one she would have admitted nor to him nor any-one, and which she scarcely admitted to herself—that he would never marry. She had given herself up in order that he might not be balked in a great and well-doing career. With the fulfilment of that, she secretly hoped that he would for ever remain content.

And, so supposing, she did not blame him? Not in the least. I will not affect to pretend that all or nearly all women are capable of thus sacrificing

themselves without accusation for the men they love. I know otherwise. Many of them—perhaps most—are about as selfish in their passions as are men ; but then there are some women—and there are *no* men—who take a positive pleasure in the torture of the stake, so only the glory of the orb that originally gave the light to set it ablaze, shine on them through the rising smoke. Mortimer was certainly the *fons et origo* of her present disasters ; but what of that ? Had he not intended to be her day-star, her sun-god, her love, her light, her life, her everything ? And what was it but the hap-hazard of terrestrial circumstance that prevented him from being such ? He might not be hers, or not hers so fully as she had once fancied he was to be ; but for all that, he was yet, and should remain, a star, a god, a light, a life-giver. To become hers, he must have ceased to be all these. In all probability indeed he would have been nor these nor hers. The first *could* be secured, and she had secured them for him. She was flung overboard, and the ship sailed royally on. She accepted the fate, without the slightest chance of seeing repeated the ultimate recompense of Shakespere's tide-tossed heroine.

Of course she did not suppose that he had made a coarse, bare bargain, or that the alternative of giving up either his claims to her or those to his cousin's countenance had been nakedly put before him and distinctly decided. She merely concluded from what little she saw, and from what more she did not see, that he had immediately upon his unpremeditated words in Alwoodley Chase, become aware of Mr. Dyneley's own intentions, and had recognized the futility of struggling against such desperate odds. She had of course given him credit for considering her interests and peace of mind as well as his own, and had only not blamed him for arriving at the conclusion that it was better they should both be free, than that she should be bound to a man who, by persisting in the bond, would be left utterly without means. That his cousin was to step into his place had probably not appeared to him as a necessary consequence of his own compulsory abdication. He had only yielded to the reasonable conviction, that his cousin would not help him to maintain the position for which the cousin himself put forward a rival claim. It was she, and not Mortimer, upon whom had been pressed, and who

had seen and yielded to the necessity of, a union with old Mr. Dyneley. Thus she acquitted him of everything but submission to invincible circumstance, and the good sense to let her quietly go, without at the same time throwing away the opportunities of beneficent activity, which alone could compensate him for the loss. Men were not like women, she pleaded for him to herself, and could not live by love only. A man's aims and occupations were of necessity many and complex. Sometimes these assisted, sometimes they thwarted, each other. Rarely could they all be combined: some had usually to be abandoned; and had he not abandoned the one which, of all others, is in a vigorous man's life the least fitted to stand alone? Domestic love and public energy, when they can be united in a man's career, as she had once dreamed of seeing them united in his, make him strong against all eventualities. Of such indeed it may be said, *Nos duo turba sumus*; we twain are a host in ourselves; but if they *must* be dissevered, and choice be made of an alliance for her gifted Mortimer, let him forego the hearth, and dwell in the arena. This had evidently been his conclusion, and she ex-

tended to it the most unselfish and unwavering approval.

When, but yesterday, her eyes were opened and her dreams dispelled, and she was driven from so much of a fool's-paradise as she still inhabited, upon what a barren, hopeless, interminable vista did her disillusioned vision awake! The supposed glorious athlete of his country was an exile, distant and disfranchised. The arena knew him not, would never know him. And the hearth—the only hearth at least which she had ever contemplated for him—was pitilessly closed for ever. But worst and bitterest of all was the reflection that, though all the rest must have gone, as it had gone now, still the hearth, *her* hearth, *might* have been preserved to him. Domestic love, standing alone, might be, as she had previously pictured it, insufficient to satisfy the varied energies of the true manly mind. But domestic love as against nothing! as against sheer blank! This would have been something, surely. And such love as *she* would have given him! it might not have been enough, but it would have been much, oh, how much! And now he had absolutely—nothing! Well might she, whilst yet

the moons were clear and high, sit nightly at her window and gaze out into the broad cold-blue expanse, as though in the silent immensity of the hour and place to find room for woes so big and so unutterable. Her face, which had been habituated from childhood upwards even to over-represent her interior resignation, and hence in her more recent and less tolerable griefs had suffered a scarce perceptible change, manifested within these last four days a marked and growing transformation. On the fourth night she looked almost ugly, and you might have even been inclined to think wicked. Her lips were so tightly compressed, and the naturally soft outlines of her jaw consequently so severely hardened, her calm outlooking eyes were so drawn together, and hence her brow so contracted and wrinkled, that it was another face, not hers at all. On the fifth night, her face was transfused and wholly obscured by tears. Still, in this pitiable guise, she looked beautiful again. She held a letter in her hand which she read and read again, laying it aside to stem the tears which had wanted to come long ago. But when, on the sixth night, a moon just two risings after full, came up

from the horizon and looked straight into the lonely watcher's face, it was pale but lovelier than ever. The letter again lay open before her ; but though the deep-blue eyes were moist and melancholy, tears trespassed not beyond their limits.

‘ That you are noble ’—the letter ran in characters wholly feminine, but in language that skilful analysis would have seen to be but partly so—‘ even I who know you not, am withal aware : and it is to your nobleness that this letter will make appeal. You and one whom it is no wonder you should have loved, and whom every human heart will forgive you if you love still, have been the victims of an unprecedented treachery. The results of that foul play, it is beyond all power to remedy. But you—and you alone—can aggravate them. If you have taken any step towards such an unhappy aggravation, pray retrace it. If you have taken no step but are only meditating it, pray pause and weigh well the contents of this communication.

‘ What is the actual position of him for whom—if as yet in vain—you have behaved so bravely ? He has neither public outlook nor private contentment. The first *you* can never give him. Whether or not

you can now give him the second, I will not argue. I will only point out that a chance of it exists elsewhere, and that you can certainly mar it.

‘He is living quietly at Caen. A quiet life was, I firmly believe, his original scheme. Circumstances alone prompted him to discard it for a busier career; and but for the unhappy events which compelled him to abandon this last, I think he would have resumed his old habits with satisfaction rather than regret. Time, that slow and therefore tender healer—will remove the one and re-induce the other. Meanwhile he is beginning to be loved by one who can give him what it is no longer in your power to bestow. If you cannot forgive—nay, sympathize with—her for loving him, you are not so noble as I thoroughly believe you to be. That he as yet has for her any the slightest feelings of love, I do not pretend, for I do not believe. But that, if he be only left in the hands of time and the constant presence of a girl who is really deserving of a gentle man’s heart, influences powerful over us all will eventually work upon him and for his good, I do not doubt. Plainly: I think it more than possible that he may end by giving her what affec-

tion is left him after his sad experience, in return for the whole of hers, and that they might be united and satisfactorily happy.

‘ That you can at this moment tear him from every man, woman, and influence in the world, and have him at your side, I am thoroughly aware. The whole question is, Will you do so? I do not at all know that you are contemplating any such step. But woman as I am who address you, I know that, smarting under such wrongs, and otherwise balked of such love, I should be sorely tempted to do so. But I do not pretend to have all your virtue. Your sacrifices have to my knowledge been so great that I found on them fresh demands. Your sacrifices will not be complete unless you make yet one more. So far they have been more than barren. Another sacrifice will bear compensating fruit.

‘ He will never, in all probability, realize your dreams: he will never be what is usually called a public man. But there is a life outside the noisy ring, less demonstrative certainly, but perhaps more beneficent. The artist or the sage cannot hope for great renown or valuable applause in days such

as these : perhaps he is as well without the latter in any. But if he can no longer be crowned, he still may triumph. He may instruct his generation, even though he receive but the usual pittance of the pedagogue.

‘ Let him do this. Once quietly married, he will dwell among placid books, solaced by placid love. At any rate, do not in a desperation unbeseeming all your previous worth, render for ever impossible so plausible a prospect. At least, look on and wait. Weigh what you *now* can offer him against such a future as the above. He perhaps will urge his own destruction and yours. Save him, then, from himself. You have striven hitherto to be his good angel. Be it, noble Isabelle, to the last.’

Who had written it? It was anonymous, in a female hand, and despatched from Hâvre. It seemed to her all but self-evident that it was written by the very girl who, the letter said, ‘ was just beginning to love him.’ That she should conceal her name, even though the facts mentioned in the letter made it easily discoverable, was natural and delicate. The letter was not posted at Caen ; but then it did not say that the girl in question

was residing there. The proximity of Hâvre, however, confirmed whatever else there was to support the theory of the girl and the writer being one.

Satisfied of the soundness of this theory, Isabelle thought that frankness and unselfishness were manifest in every sentence of the letter. Whilst disavowing pretension to capacity of virtue, such as it attributed to her to whom it was addressed, it betrayed in all its tone that it had been dictated by a noble nature. All that was said in it in favour of 'one who was just beginning to love him,' was that she was 'really deserving of a gentle man's heart.' And was it not true? The writer had evidently studied and mastered Mortimer's character, as well as his perplexities. But more than all—Did she not offer for them the best and most commendable solution? Could any one who professed to love Mortimer Dyneley step in and say, 'This shall not be? Without a tinge of unworthy jealousy, it confessed that Isabelle had now consummate influence over him. It even went further. It almost offered beforehand to find an excuse for her if she exercised, even whilst it deprecated her exercising,

such influence. It stated in the strongest and most sympathizing language, the wrongs of both, and contented itself with drawing a simple picture of the only calculable means by which the wrongs of one could be, if not redressed, at least obliterated. And though the picture was simple, yet how admirably was it drawn! The girl who could draw it had no ordinary gifts. She was indeed deserving of more than a gentle man's heart: she was fitted to be an intellectual man's companion. And such a one offered Mortimer peace, becoming—perhaps the most becoming—occupation, and love.

She smoothed the letter out once more. She read it again. She raised it to her lips. She kissed it fervently, and her face shone like a star!

CHAPTER V.

MORTIMER meanwhile had returned to Caen. Though he had been absent but a few days, he thought he saw De Saintfront considerably altered, and inquired if his friend had been suffering from one of his worse attacks of pain. He was assured in the negative, and truly assured. But the fact was that the retired officer was and had long been fast ageing, though the process was so regular as to escape the observation of those who saw him daily. An absence, however, of so short a period as a week was sufficient to make manifest a decay, steady but rapid. It was the first time that Mortimer had been struck by the change. And now he fancied imaginary causes rather than divined the right one.

But he was too much preoccupied with thoughts more directly and deeply bearing upon his own personal interests, to be curious about a matter

which merely concerned his benevolent feelings. Satisfied by the assurance that De Saintfront was, if anything, more free from physical suffering than usual, he gave himself up to the immediate prosecution of schemes which he had informed Bracebridge he should now pursue. He would work in earnest. He threw into final shape every manuscript which was capable of steady completion, and dispatched them with a letter to his friend in England. Resolved to be no longer, for the present at least, the sport of dreams, artistic or other, he braced himself up for the labour which, if uncongenial, was most likely to be immediately remunerative. He was amazed with himself and his huge unsuspected capacity for work. The very toil fortunately forced him into sound slumber; but early of mornings the sound of pen upon paper commenced, and was pushed on late into the nights. Jeannette could not understand what had come over Monsieur, who, when he used to work, worked in snatches. Now, the proportion of labour and leisure was inverted.

But, if Jeannette was puzzled, a bosom younger and perhaps tenderer than hers was the abode of more troubled sensations. Disappointed as she had

been in all her pleasant schemes for the fifteenth of the month just gone, by Mortimer's unavoidable departure for England, she had certainly expected that he would, on his return, at least renew the expression of his regret at inevitable absence from the Fête, and manifest some kindly interest and curiosity in the enjoyment which she had still contrived to reap from the national holiday. He did not ask her a single question upon the subject. His greeting had been anything but demonstrative of gladness. He had politely but indifferently inquired about her health, and had scarcely addressed another word to her since his return. Despite his laborious seclusion, he still contrived to see De Saintfront for a short time every day ; but instead of conversing, as heretofore, mostly with the father and a little with the daughter, he had now very little to say to the first, and absolutely nothing to the second. In his talk with the parent, he seemed absent and uninterested ; but the girl he seemed simply to ignore. What had she done to deserve such cruel treatment ? Was this the recompense for all her heartfelt prayers to our Lady in his behalf ? She had asked for comfort

and happiness and strength, and everything he could want, to be returned to him. She had wept in asking them. She had felt sure that the kind Madonna would get them for him. And he came back, and asked how she was, and then took no more notice. Just before he went away, they were beginning to be friends, to be intimate. He had assisted her in her sketches ; he had talked to her about her histories ; he had proposed to go with her to Saint-Etienne. Why had he come back at all ? He appeared quite estranged, and she was very miserable.

About a week after his return, feeling unwontedly fatigued about five o'clock one afternoon with exertions that were really becoming too protracted, he started off for a short but rapid walk in the hope of speedily regaining his elasticity. The exercise had produced the anticipated effect ; and quite refreshed by his round, he was returning home by the Place d'Armes at a quick pace, when, seated on a bench which he was approaching, he saw Marian, but without her father. He pulled up and raised his hat, though evidently with no intention of halting there long, much less of seating himself by her side.

‘How is your papa to-day?’ he asked. ‘I have not seen him yet; but I shall look in some time in the evening. I thought he might have been here. He is not unwell?’

‘No,’ she said, and her voice trembled. ‘We had rather a long—long walk this morning, and he is tired.’ And the tears came up into her eyes; she did not heed them, however, for fear of calling attention to them. But Mortimer could not fail to see them.

‘What is the matter?’ he asked; the question, of course, bringing the tears a step further. ‘What has happened? Nothing sad, I hope?’ And now he sat down beside her, taking her little hand, as the tears came further and further.

‘Nothing, Mr. Dyneley, nothing really;’ and she gently released her hand to brush away the tears.

‘Something is, I am sure,’ he said. ‘Come, tell me. I fear I am very stupid and outwardly unsympathetic sometimes, but I cannot see you weep and sit by, asking no questions.’

‘No, you are not unsympathetic. You are very kind, sometimes at least, indeed always; but I mean—I mean—are you angry with me?’

‘Angry with you, dear!’ The tender paternal word seemed to fall naturally from his stately lips. ‘Surely not. How could I be angry with you? and for what?’

‘That was what I wondered. You used to talk to me, and help me, and advise me what to read before—before you went away; but now—now—you never even speak to me.’

‘Don’t I? It is only accident, believe me. You must know, Marian—’ he always spoke of her to her father as Marian, though he really had never had occasion before to call her by any name in addressing her—‘you must know, Marian, that I have had a great many troubles.’

‘I know that,’ she said, with a tone and look of sweet pity.

‘Your papa perhaps has told you?’

‘Yes; long ago. Be sure I have felt and grieved, and—do not laugh—and prayed for you.’

‘Laugh! I thank you from my heart. If prayers can help me, yours will, I am sure.’

‘I have prayed very hard, and I would do—oh! anything—to make you happier.’

‘I am sure you would; but do not think that I

am miserable. I am not, indeed. I am serious ; that is all. Is it not natural that I should be so ? If my misfortunes and—and those of others,' he added, after a pause—'did not make me grave, you could not respect me.'

'Which I do, immensely.'

'At present, I am very busy working, and the work occupies my mind. This makes me perhaps more silent ; but if I have been unintentionally unkind, forgive me ; will you not ?'

'Oh ! I have nothing to forgive. You are too good. I do not suppose that I have any right to expect you to spend your time in talking much with me. I only wanted to know that you were not angry with me about something, and am so glad that you are not. Now, I must be going to papa.'

'Let us go. I will go with you.' And all the way home he talked and talked, so that she thought to herself—if he could only be always like this !

That night, with customary simplicity and truthfulness, she told her father what had passed between her and Mortimer.

'I am so glad he came, and that I took courage

to ask him ; for I was so, so miserable, thinking that I must have done something to offend him.'

'What couldst thou do to offend any one, darling?' asked the fond father in French ; 'but I too am glad that the question is asked. I would not have thee miserable. But he is a fine brave man, and loves us both, and would be not angry with or unkind to either thee or me.' Then breaking off into English—'Poor fellow! he has suffered so much, and even more than I imagined. He told me last night that he has discovered that the girl who you thought had treated him so ill, and whom you had abused to me so often with your little woman's tongue, has been more fully betrayed even than himself.'

'But how? it is impossible. Why did she marry his rich cousin?'

'Because she thought his rich cousin would always be kind to him if she did, and never would do anything more for him if she did not; and she was led to believe that he submitted to this arrangement, feeling it to be unavoidable.'

'But is it true? How does he know it is true?'

'She told him so herself.'

‘Then he has seen her?’

‘Yes; he has had a long interview with her.’

‘When he was away, last week?’

‘Yes, then. You see her conduct has not been “*infâme*,” and so on with your pretty French adjectives. She has been very noble and very unfortunate.’

‘Does *he* think so?’

‘How can he think otherwise?’

‘And he never knew this before his recent visit to England?’

‘No; he knew nothing. Do you not pity them both?’

‘Yes, immensely; if it be all true.’

‘But it *is* all true, little sceptic.’

‘Perhaps it is.’

And their conversation ended.

The discovery that a person whom you have believed to be singularly virtuous, is singularly wicked, is doubtless disappointing; but the proof that a person whom you have suspected and denounced as singularly wicked, is on the contrary singularly virtuous, is on the whole, I think, more disagreeable. It is not only that you have been

unjust and deficient in penetration, but you have done such grievous wrong that the mere recantation of your previously expressed opinion, being but a due confession of now transparent worth, is no reparation at all for past injuries. It puts you so horribly in debt, that you would really rather maintain some of your credit by its turning out that such people do not deserve to be thoroughly whitewashed after all. Of course you are too benevolent to wish them to retain the entirely black complexion of the lost; but you cannot honestly desire to see them invested with an angelic whiteness and unblemished glory that would only cover you with utter confusion. You will be satisfied with a compromise. You are ready to grant that the devil is not quite so black as he is painted, provided it be conceded that some ugly dabs could still be found if they were only sought for with moderate diligence.

Marian had unquestionably regarded, and to her father denounced, Isabelle Dyneley, as the very scorn of her sex—heartless, treacherous, self-seeking—in fact, not a woman at all. With such facts before her as she then had, Marian De Saintfront had fair enough ground for her femininely expressed

opinion. What Mortimer Dyneley thought, she did not know, as never a word upon the subject had passed between them; but she knew what he ought to think. She had never for a moment dissociated the intense sympathy and sorrow she entertained, both in her thoughts and prayers, for Mortimer, from the contempt and loathing for the girl who had brought him to such melancholy straits. Had she known from the first that the girl had, to say the very least, been fully as unfortunate as himself, it is certain that she would not have spent upon the two together half the commiseration which she had been spending on him alone. If anybody be induced by this assertion to think meanly of Marian De Saintfront, all I can say is, that they know very little of human nature in general, and probably nothing of female nature in particular. So elementary and universal a phenomenon in man's psychological constitution calls for no ebullition of contempt save from such as, despising analysis, imagine their species to be perfect, or those who imagine that their species are to be analyzed only to be despised.

The discovery of Isabelle's faultlessness—to say

nothing as yet of her actual merit—was not only disagreeable and discomfoting to Marian; it was a positive blow. She had virtually been wasting all her pity. She had been sympathizing with a man who had been basely deserted and ruined by a girl whom he loved; and now it turned out that the girl had not deserted him at all, but had loved him loyally, and had made a victim of herself in order to save him from ruin. No doubt this, if it had been the first information she had received on the subject, would have elicited a temporary pity and a lasting admiration; but she would not have deemed as standing in need of all the feelings which she had extended to Mortimer, two young people who loved each other, and were suffering the hereditary and proverbial penalty for their indulgence in such a fatal luxury. She would have been sorry for them and wished them well, and there would have been an end.

But how was it to end now? She had innocently allowed her pity for a man, whom scarce any woman would have found unpleasing, to wax into a tender yearning to mitigate his griefs. They were not in altogether such deplorable want of mitigation as she

had imagined ; and what mitigation they could receive, would come from quite another quarter than her kind nursing. *She* could do him no good ; why then should she trouble herself about him ? But she had acquired a habit of troubling herself very considerably about him, and she could not change her habit in a day. She wished she had never seen him—never heard of him. She wished he would go away and come back no more. No ; she did not quite wish that. She wished—she did not know *what* she wished. Was it not almost a pity that Isabelle was not a monster ? Would it not be better for Mortimer if she were ? She wished Isabelle were. No ; she did not wish that ; that would be wicked. Ah ! Marian ! Marian ! you do not know your guest ; and perhaps even I should be too confident and familiar if I as yet addressed him with the title of Love. If it really be he, there still is time to bundle him out of doors and send him packing. But he soon makes himself at home. Give him ever so little encouragement, he turns one out of one's easy chair and ensconces himself in the corner of the ingle as long as ever there is fuel to heap upon the hearth.

Had De Saintfront told Marian about Mortimer's interview and discovery but a few hours earlier, she would never have said to him what she did say on the bench in the Place d'Armes ; and, consequently, he would never have treated her with the tenderness which at the moment was natural, nor afterwards have thought to alter his cold behaviour towards her. But, on being reproached with this last in the sweet, simple way in which Marian had mentioned it, he saw at once that he must have been unintentionally treating her with a neglect which almost amounted to unkindness. Once made conscious of this, he resolved to guard against the possibility of all such inadvertent cruelty for the future ; and accordingly he forthwith commenced treating her with a gentle and considerate kindness which was no more than her due, but which, after his recent indifference, seemed more gentle than it really was. But for this, even his affectionate demeanour on the bench would not have counterbalanced the effect of the information received from her father a few hours later. Work, indeed ! she had thought to herself that night in her own little room. Occupied with work, is he ? Ah ! he is

absorbed by other considerations. He loves, he cannot help loving still, however hopelessly. He may well be cold, indifferent, distracted, absent. His heart, his very life, is elsewhere. And hence she went off into those perplexing reflections which have been considered above. But, as I say, it is certain that, had his manner continued to be absent, indifferent, and cold, she would probably have ended by conquering her excessive interest in him, have abandoned, or shortened, or lessened the intensity of her prayers for him, and have come to regard him as an unhappy, disappointed, silent, on the whole rather stupid personage.

But when the next day, and the next, and the day again after that, he came and sat some little time, and spent at least half of it in noticing her, she could not refrain from thinking how much Isabelle Dyneley had lost in not marrying this man. What was she reading? What was it about? There was a difficulty at such a page, was there? Well, it was to be explained thus, or perhaps thus. Was this the last sketch? It was a view on the river surely? Of course it was. On the whole, it was excellent; but he thought he could suggest

some improvement in the water. Was there not going to be another procession in Saint-Etienne on Sunday? He was so sorry to have missed the grand one on the 15th ; but would not this one be almost as good? Any how, might he go with her on Sunday? And then off he went home, and sat down to his work, and wrote far into the night, forgetting all about the little heart which he had unconsciously troubled so with his novel kindness. So, despite all our fine theories of free-will, and conscience, and reason, and duty, we go blindly bungling on in the dark. Once only when his hand, more wearied than his brain, forced him to take a quarter of an hour's rest, her image rose before him ; and he immediately congratulated himself on the happy manner which he had that day inaugurated and intended thenceforward to continue towards her. He little knew that as far as the promotion of her happiness was concerned, one short sentence which he had casually let fall had more than balanced the result produced by all else that he had said. It was simply to the effect that he fully expected to have to go over to England again within a few days.

Again at the usual hour he looked in upon father and daughter. And, as on the preceding days, he addressed himself in due proportion to her. But she had already begun too much to count upon her little talk with him, to measure its quantity and quality and compare them with the quantity and quality of the day preceding or the day again before that, not to notice that this afternoon, his words were not so ready, nor was his manner so natural as both had recently been. She asked him if he was very tired. No, he said; he had not been doing anything all day. How was that? He did not know. When did he think he should go to England? He could not say. Perhaps he should not go at all. And as he did not seem particularly pleased with her questions, she discontinued them. He seemed anxious to get away. He left her in a state of feeling exactly the reverse of that of yesterday. This evening, she was rendered uneasy again by his manner, but considerably consoled by the assurance that perhaps he was not going to England at all.

He certainly had not been anxious to return to his own rooms in order to apply himself afresh to

literary toil. Manuscript certainly lay before him, but it was not the work of his own hands; and it might have been learned by heart in a tenth part of the time which he had already this day spent in sitting before it.

‘Once more released, dear Mortimer,’ it ran, ‘from the influence of your presence, I again can see more clearly the path in which your interests and my duties lie; and I cannot doubt that your judgment is equally purified by being released from the influence of mine.

‘Were I, in order to prevent for ever whatever is pernicious in either influence, to stoop to the counsel of vulgar opinion, I suppose I should in this letter affect to have vanquished all the feelings of love which I ever entertained for you. I should strive to make you forget me by falsely if prudently asserting that I have all but forgotten you. I should write of the bygone days as a period of foolish dreaming, from which it was time for both to awake. In a word, I should desecrate the past in order to secure the future.

‘I cannot consent to degrade you or myself so far. We must not condescend to win so

ignominious a victory. No ; I have no words of affection to recall, no dream to dissipate, no illusion to despise. I loved you, and you loved me, and I thank God for it. Our past must be eternally sacred. Sorrow has not succeeded in alienating us from it ; and it must never be outraged by Defiance.

‘ But, for all that, it must remain the Past. I write—not, as you will expect, to name a fresh day of feverish meeting, but—to bid you, for very long at least, an affectionate but determined farewell. Heaven is responsible for our last encounter ; we should be responsible for our next. That I still love you—I will not shrink nor let you shrink from *all* the truth—is the cause of my resolve. But I am not conscious of having ever loved you selfishly, unless it be when you were too near to be considered. You are now far enough away to be regarded calmly. You must—you shall—never come nearer till time have sobered our emotions.

‘ But think not that I could be satisfied with unloosing our fortunes, and leaving yours the sport of the next wind or wave. I know you will not ascribe to devoted affection the character of pre-

sumption, if I now offer you advice rather than seek it. It is not that I have suddenly become wise, or you suddenly foolish. In ordinary circumstances your natural position would be that of counsellor, and mine that of the counselled. But, under the strange circumstances of our lot, my position is so definite and final that I have only to remain in it to follow out my evident vocation. *Fais ton fait* is all the advice which the highest judgment, if honest, could offer me. But your position is as indefinite as any position well could be ; and that it is final, I should indeed be bitterly miserable if I supposed. Who then has a better right to offer loving suggestions as to the means by which it can be formed and finished, than she who unfortunately has had so much to do with unsettling it? Leave me where I am, is (if necessary) my command. On no account remain where you are, is my counsel.

‘I speak not of place. Any spot, sufficiently distant from *me*, provided that it harmonize with your taste and pursuits, will be found suitable to what I fancy is now your destined career. I am again compelled to express a hope that you will

not think I too far presume, in thus ascribing to myself an insight into your capacities and inclinations. Did not you yourself give it me? Need I do more than recall our too-pleasant colloquies in Alwoodley Chase, to excuse myself from any imputation of vanity? By the light of your then confessions, I think I can construct in my now solitary darkness a scheme of life such as would better satisfy your intellectual cravings and (do I write intelligibly?) forward your sociological views even more than the political career which I now imagine you were inclined rather to accept than to choose? You often talked to me, and deprecatingly, of the turmoil and scramble which accompany modern public life, and glanced at the peace which attends purely speculative or imaginative pursuits. I really do not think that my affection deceives me. Trying to judge with the eyes of an unbiassed spectator, I firmly believe that your natural bent would lead you to such pursuits; and their end, if not their beginning, would be peace.

‘On this I have surely said enough. I should not have dared say anything, did I not believe that in saying it I am but striking a chord that naturally

vibrates in your constitution, and that I am only recalling and suggesting to you what you have already declared to me of yourself. All I ask is: Let not the past overshadow you, but let your nature have free-play.

‘But on one other point, I may be permitted to say something at least, if not much. God has thought fit to dissever us. His will be done! But resignation is complete only when it is prepared to act fairly by the future as well as kindly by what is irrevocable. Therefore is it that I declare that not only shall I be contented for you to accept whatever opportunity of domestic love and comfort the future may present to you, but I urge such upon your acceptance with all the fervour of my soul. The motives for my desiring it are founded exclusively upon your interests; but I can press it upon you with arguments founded exclusively on mine, aware as I am that such will have with you infinite force. And nothing, believe me, can ever completely reconcile me to my griefs but the consciousness that you are doing something for mankind and are moderately at peace with yourself. Literature (in some form that I cannot pretend

to dictate) will procure the first, marriage the second. And I can no more doubt that you will again be loved than that you can forward the improvement of your race. When I see both these, I will again see *you*, and you will find me happy and contented. God guide you, Mortimer.'

The emotions excited by this letter were various and shifting. They had all the mobility, with none of the definiteness, of the forms of the kaleidoscope. His first sensation was of a rush of passionate love which could not be stayed, and moved by which he must at once fly to England, seek her side, and prove his determination never to leave it. But with a power of sudden check came upon him the words of the letter, 'You must—you shall—never come nearer, till time shall have sobered our emotions.' The very fact of his immediate and instinctive desire to be nearer was the very reason and justification of her affectionate but dignified and determined prohibition. His next mental move was from impulse to argument. *Why* might he not go nearer to her? *Why* might he not see her again, and forthwith? Had not both their lives been foully undermined and shattered? If everything be

according to the proverb, fair in love as in war, surely here was a case, if ever there was one, in which conventional social rules might be more than excusably disregarded. Had she not been stolen from him, purloined, decoyed, deceived, dragged from him by worse than violence? Had she not been outraged with villanous ingenuity? She, his cousin's wife, in the sight of Heaven! The very words were a mockery. Were not his arguments infinitely better than such counterfeit sanctions as a civil ceremonial sealed upon a fraud? And then again, for all his eagerness to be convinced, rushed upon him the objection transparent through all the letter, that the better their cause, the more substantial their wrongs, and the more plausible the available pretext for vindicating their invaded rights, the more sound and impregnable still the decision; 'You must never come nearer till time shall have sobered our emotions.' Both impulse and argument were alike hurled back by that unflinching sentence—facing facts and awake to every possible danger—of resolute feminine defence.

What, then, was there left for him to do? To fall back upon his state of mind such as it had been

three weeks ago, before their accidental meeting? But that was impossible. Then, he had remained passive, because he knew nothing and feared too much to wish to know anything. As he himself had said, he had not judged, inasmuch as he had not even arraigned her. With an effort at repression, painful but successful because always sustained, he had as good as banished her from his conscious life. In banishing her, it is true that he had likewise banished all that was wholesome in himself. In repressing all thoughts and speculations about her, he had actually repressed—almost suppressed—his own soul. But he had done it. Now, she had not only been judged, but acquitted; and acquitted under circumstances that made it impossible any longer to ignore the influence which she had exercised, and must for ever continue to exercise, upon his mind and fortunes. If it was absolute that in space he must be no nearer her, it was equally absolute that in sentiment he could be no further from her, ‘till time should have sobered their emotions.’

But did not the letter contemplate and provide for this difficulty likewise? Let him turn to it, and

read how nobly it refused to 'stoop to the counsels of vulgar opinion,' and 'to desecrate the Past in order to secure the Future.' 'I cannot'—did it not go on to say?—'consent to degrade you or myself so far. We must not condescend to win so ignominious a victory. No; I have no words of affection to recall, no dream to dissipate, no illusion to despise. I loved you, and you loved me, and I thank God for it. Our past must be eternally sacred. Sorrow has not succeeded in alienating us from it; and it must never be outraged by defiance.' Irrevocable, then, as was the conclusion that he must in body be absent, almost as rigorous was the injunction not to fly ignominiously or defiantly from her in mind. Time would temper and arrange their mental relationship, and so would permit the renewal of physical proximity. How wonderfully had she anticipated his difficulty! How delicately had she made for it a provision! Oh, inscrutable Heaven! he sighed, why had lifelong union with such a woman been denied him? And then the emotional state rushed over him again, and he must—*must* be near to her at least; must hear her voice, see her eyes, feel her presence, exist in her existence.

Never! 'till time shall have sobered his emotions!'

How was he to assist time in its therapeutic office, and by what occupations to employ, and so shorten, the interval? Again the letter told him. But it told him two things. One was to marry, or at least not to repudiate the notion of marriage; the other, to encourage the free exercise of those artistic faculties which had been allotted to him. The exquisite self-oblivion which prompted the first recommendation, he could not fail to see, to admire, to worship. But neither time nor circumstance had had its way with him sufficiently as yet to make him capable of so much as entertaining the advice. But the second recommendation, coming on the top of his own bent, he was ready to embrace at once. Art, as manifested in Literature, should be his *cultus*, at once the employment and religion of his life. Why had he ever abandoned it even in theory? Why had he not long since embraced it in practice, and in it faithfully persisted? Had he done so, might not all have now been different? Had he not violated his own nature? Had he not refused to obey the Divine injunctions within him? neglecting them at

first from excessive idealism and cultivated indolence combined ; and later, on positively contradicting and silencing them in order to harken to the voice of injunctions more mundane and big with vulgar promise ? And had not the selfsame power that sent the Divine injunctions which he chose to disregard, interfered with circumstantial bar to prevent his consummating the contemplated sacrilege of his soul ? Was not all this dense dark cloth round the cage intended to *force* him to sing ? He had been given the woods and the hills, and the rivers, and all the manifold world to sing in, and he had never given earth or heaven a single note. Would he sing now ? The letter said he must ; and he would.

But if he came to sing so that the world would harken, with that would not she who wrote the letter be satisfied ? The other piece of counsel was out of the question ; and after all, did she not urge it only for the sake of promoting his peace of mind ? Let her not be afraid ; Art would satisfy that condition likewise.

Time was when he thought otherwise. Who does not remember a soliloquy on Gracewood lawn,

in which the character of 'human' was scarcely conceded to the 'single' life? What shall we answer for him? Probably he would have answered for himself that circumstances quite unanticipated had forced him to think differently. It is the only answer that could be given. But does it not suggest the reflection that unanticipated circumstances may again compel him to think differently from what he is thinking now? Ah! it is rather late in life before a man grows to allow that his last opinion may possibly not be the very last of all!

Final or transitional, however, upon it he must be prepared at once to act. Of course, it must not be supposed that he arrived at it quite so rapidly as we have. It took him some days to reach anything like equilibrium through the complex oscillating disturbances provoked by the receipt of the letter. But it was not till he had reached it that a reply was conceived. When it was executed it stood thus:—

'Your letter entitles you to an increase of my love. So complete however was it before, that I can manifest its increase only by disregarding its desires and submitting to your decision. Frank

even as you are frank, I will not pretend to be either satisfied or convinced. My soul strains to get near you. My reason cannot disapprove the impulse. I restrain both because you bid me. Can I do more to prove to you that I will not only not desecrate, but that I do and will for ever reverence our past? Two things you command: one bitterly hard, the other too easy for obedience to be meritorious. You bid me not to approach you. I seem to violate the law of my life, but I obey. You bid me not to forget you. Disobedience were as impossible to defiance as to affection.

‘Two things also you counsel. Be satisfied if I give the go-by to one, and promise a cheerful compliance with the other. Yes! Art shall henceforth be my suzerain. I am angry and ashamed at having withheld my homage for so long. Had I conceded it earlier, we might not be where we now are.

‘Confidence is perhaps too apt to accompany the inauguration of a new undertaking; and I may but add to the long list of men who have failed in the most difficult of pursuits. If I succeed, I have your pledge that you will at length be happy. If I

fail, I shall at least have obeyed you and my earliest instincts.

‘I dare not say more. I write in studied though in honest language, since I must not permit myself the words which rush upon my pen. Yet, peerless Isabelle! how I have loved and love you! Let my obedience, and not my language, be the measure of an affection too fond even to be grateful. May God be all to you that you have been to me!’

He repressed the choking in his throat, insurgent as he wrote the final words. No tear had blotted her brave letter. There should be none on his. Hers he would for ever preserve as the Rule and Manifesto of his life.

CHAPTER VI.

SURELY it could be only among an overworked people that the belief in a connection between labour and an original curse could have arisen. Did it spring up among the Jews whilst doomed to excessive toil by their hard Egyptian task-masters? And hence did it get itself inserted in the earlier narrative of him who was at once their mighty leader and historian? On such a supposition, it becomes intelligible. On any other, it is irreconcilable with either individual or national experience. The sweat of the brow, when not exorbitantly wrung, has ever been, and still is, the very chrism of salvation both to men and empires. If we *must* cling to the doctrine of a primal and permanent curse, we shall be forced to ascribe to the sentence a signification more consistent with universal facts. It is not that we are cursed to toil, but that we are inevitably

cursed if we do not. Work, not the renunciation of it, provokes the penalty that cannot be evaded.

But the curse, if curse there be, is twofold. It is attached to excessive equally as to defective labour. And in the times in which we live, we should dread the first rather than the second. There is in modern politics, a perhaps unconscious but most powerful organization for getting all the work out of a man of which he is capable. Our industrial epoch is a positive vampire, striving to suck from everyone within its grasp the very last drop of blood. The silent influence, perceptible only in its results, of this organization, every wise man will resist. He will work (Heaven help him—nay, Heaven cannot help him—if he does not!), he will work, but even for the nineteenth century, not unduly. He will exorcise the brute spirit by intelligent energy; but not less will he vindicate the God within him by casual repose.

Mortimer inaugurated his labours with immoderate application; but as this excess was due to enthusiasm and determination combined, and not to any external power which urged him to sow in order that it might reap, he gradually arrived at an

impartial and therefore happy compromise between entire work and entire leisure. Once having made this due division, he rigidly preserved it. And he was astonished to find how soon he felt the presence, if of nothing like happiness, at least of something very like content.

Six quiet weeks thus passed away, and then there came a letter from Guy Bracebridge. He said he was sure that Mortimer would think he had been very long in doing anything with the manuscripts sent to England. For a time, he had despaired of doing anything with them. He had shown them in every journalistic quarter with which he was personally acquainted ; but all that Mortimer had sent was unsuitable in substance, whatever merit it might have in execution. By sheer accident, he had shown them to a man whose name Mortimer would not recognize, but who appeared to be in communication with the editors of two or three monthly magazines, even if he had not with them some more direct connection. The upshot, however, of it was that he was very glad to be able to tell Mortimer that a prose paper and a sonnet were accepted, and would be duly paid for by a magazine which he named.

Mortimer was more assured than gratified by the intelligence. It will not be supposed that any manuscript which he had dispatched came at all within the scope of those artistic labours which, in accordance with Isabelle's letter, were henceforth to be his life's occupation. But it was becoming high time that he made money somehow. He had exhausted the small fund with which he had started his life of exile, and he had nothing to depend on but the seventy pounds a-year obtained from Gracewood, and what he now could contrive to earn. So that Bracebridge's letter, whilst affording him no earnest of the higher success which he coveted, gave him considerable comfort on the score of ways and means no longer to be neglected. Even if Art should ever come to pay his modest way for him, it was quite certain that it would not do so for many a long day. Meanwhile, if not always, he must be satisfied to unite the two distinct avocations of writing for Art's sake, and writing for subsistence' sake. This latter did not please him. But there was nothing else for it. Had it not been for this necessity, he would not have been even now in Caen. He should have gone, on the receipt of Isabelle's

written decision, straight off to Italy ; feeling that his art could best be cultivated among the scenes, and his resignation best be effected in the distance, which the beautiful transalpine land afforded. Once let him establish a connection, steady and to be depended on, with periodicals in England, and the snowy mountains should not long be between him and the soft sunny peninsula for which he hungered. Very little would satisfy him. An assurance of eighty pounds a-year, which joined to the Gracewood contribution, would give him a clear income of 150*l.*, would send him swift and straight to the gardens and cities where so much was to be had for so very little. There, if anywhere, could he fulfil his own and Isabelle's dream, and be one of the beneficent thinkers of his time.

The very prose paper whose acceptance he valued only for the required remuneration which it brought, was based on reminiscences of the scenes amongst which he yearned to find himself once more. It was a descriptive ride through ancient Latium, in which classic and mediæval associations were blended with the reflections of modern travel. About three weeks after the arrival of Bracebridge's first letter came

a copy of the magazine with the paper inserted, and a communication from the editor forwarded through Guy, expressing his readiness, and indeed his desire, to be favoured with another contribution of a similar, or analogous character. With this agreeable request Mortimer wrote to express himself most willing to comply, as soon as ever he could dispatch one satisfactory in length and substance. So completely novel was this his success, and so opportune its occurrence, that it almost raised his spirits to a pitch that, compared with their recent standard of elevation, might be termed high. Yet for all the material recompense—eight guineas in fact—which they brought and which was so sorely needed, the prose pages upon *Latium* gave him no approach to the delight which he experienced in the printed but unpaid-for sonnet which, as affording some ground for judging of the likelihood of his ultimate success in the highest walk of literature, I think it appropriate to quote.

SONNET.

Take not the Gods to task, for they are wise,
When they refuse, no less than when they grant.
Thou canst but know, with all thy bursting sighs,
What is thy whim; but never what thy want.

Did They, to smite thine importunity,
Answer each swift unregulated prayer,
Oh, what accurs'd trudger wouldst thou be,
And what a world of fardels have to bear !
Check thy lament. The days will surely come,
Thou wilt regard each crossed or shattered hope,
As now thou dost poor Philip's broken drum,
Or little Rosie's tangled skipping-rope.
Confide in Time, who will, as years expire,
Indulge or else annihilate desire !

Previously to his recently-commenced but now regularly-pursued literary labours, he had led a life almost if not fully as desultory as that of De Saintfront. At first he had contented himself with telling his elderly friend that he had grown tired of an existence so purposeless, and that he must work at something to stave off the tedium incident to deficiency of occupation. Then, a little later, he had averred that he was endeavouring to eke out his scant means of subsistence by composition. And when, growing franker, he had confessed that he had no present anticipation of obtaining remuneration for more work than would occupy him one week out of three, he was then compelled to account for toil which was, if moderate, withal diurnal, by a complete explanation of the scheme of life to which his original bent, his more recent misfortunes, and

the bidding of the (to him) most authoritative lips on earth, cogently drove him. De Saintfront could conceal neither his amaze nor his disapproval.

‘How?’ he asked. ‘You—you, Mortimer Dyneley—sensible fellow, man of the world, with experience enormous for your years, thoughtful, just a little cynical, and accustomed to weigh things in an accurate balance—you going to cultivate Literature as High Art, in the nineteenth century! A man cannot prevent himself from being born in such a rascally Age: but really he need not struggle to be an anachronism. Well; I suppose too much failure has much the same effect as too much success. It turns a man’s head.’

‘And you think it has turned mine?’

‘I do, indeed, though I had no reason to think so before now.’

‘I am quite ready to grant that there have been periods when Art—I speak of it in the highest signification ever attached to the word—could be cultivated under more favourable conditions than in these later times.’

‘Cultivated!’ exclaimed the other. ‘Pardon me; but the very use of the word “cultivation,” as

applied to Art, is a misnomer. You confess that you speak of Art in its highest meaning ; that is, you exclude technic Art (which is not Art at all, but only Craft), and intend to argue about spontaneous or plastic Art.'

' But surely Craft enters into plastic Art.'

' Unquestionably : but how far, it is very difficult to ascertain. This much at least I think we may say, that *conscious* Craft scarcely enters into Art at all, or enters into it only when the soul of Art has perished, or is perishing, and clothes itself with the outer garb of what—since the phenomenon long continues to be mistaken by the vulgar for the fact—still maintains the title by virtue of the exterior. But whether conscious Craft enters little or much into Art, the most perfect and abundant Craft is not Art, however successfully it may pass itself off for such in an Age which does not like to confess being entirely without the divinest of all human attributes.'

' But if,' urged Mortimer, ' it be conceded—and I understand that you cannot wholly deny—that Craft necessarily enters, though ever so little, into Art, *that* Craft stands in need of cultivation.'

‘Possibly; but I am sure you already see that the concession sought for by you entirely upsets the position with which you started. Was it not this? that there have been periods when Art could be cultivated under more favourable conditions than at present? Now, if it be only the Craft that enters into Art, that stands in need of and can be cultivated, surely there never was a time when it could be so successfully cultivated as now. When before could sculptors obtain such excellent chisels, or such splendid blocks of marble? When before did physiology and anatomy present them with such trustworthy information? The advance of chemistry is giving to modern painters a chromatic advantage denied to Fra Angelico. In literature, where material progress does not perhaps afford the same superiority of mechanical means to modern as against by-gone writers, still they have the example of styles already perfected, laborious analyses of what makes those styles perfect, and an immense number of lately-discovered analogies to assist them. Take what walk of Art you will, you will be quite unable to deny that the conscious Craft of Art—if such can really enter into it—can be cultivated now

under conditions infinitely more favourable than at any preceding period of the world's history.'

'It is impossible to deny it.'

'Then, does it not rigorously follow, either that Art never could have been cultivated under conditions so favourable as now, or that—as far as the question is affected by any argument you have yet adduced—Art can never be *cultivated* at all?'

'Well, yes. I spoke unadvisedly. I ought to have said, that there have been times when the conditions for the existence of Art were more favourable than they are now.'

'Ha! Now you have hit it; but have you answered—indeed, have you put—the question, whether the conditions for the existence of Art, in the sense in which we are speaking of it, exist now *at all*? Certain conditions there unquestionably must be, without which Art cannot actively exist, any more than you can breathe without oxygen, or swim without water.'

'And you believe that such conditions do not now exist?'

'Precisely; and therefore I called your attempts to attain High Art in Literature anachronous. Yet,

perhaps, I have overstated my belief. The conditions are not entirely absent ; but they exist to so small an amount, and even in this shrunken state are so terribly harassed by hostile conditions that, for all practical purposes, they are non-existent. Physicists tell us that we cannot entirely exhaust the air in a receiver ; but we can reduce it to such tenuity that vitality soon begins to gasp and sprawl, and finally dies out in it.'

'And Art has pretty much the same chance of vitality in the nineteenth century ?'

'Exactly ; at least, in this period of it, and in that period which is evidently coming. But as I should really like to snatch you out of the perils of a melancholy mistake, let us see what, so far, we may consider as established. We have got rid of the notion that Art is an affair of cultivation, and we have established the notion that it is an affair of conditions. It is not a matter purely within the scope of individual volition. Personal desire for active Art even united with personal capacity for it (we *must* use the latter phrase) is of no avail, unless there be the elements to tolerate its exercise. In a word, a man cannot create Art in an unartistic atmo-

sphere. Speaking more objectively, a man cannot be an Artist (still using the word in our originally strict signification) in unartistic, and especially in an anti-artistic century.'

'Which this period of the nineteenth is?'

'That is what we have yet got to show; and we can show it only by proving the absence of those conditions which are necessary to Art.'

'Those conditions, then, we must first discover.'

'Quite so. But we are already agreed that they reside not so much in the individual as in the society which surrounds him. What the individual could contribute towards artistic creations probably exists as much in one age as in another. It is in society that we must look for the presence or absence of conditions which govern the result in question.'

'It seems to me, then, that our first problem is — What are the necessary *social* conditions of Art?'

'Precisely. And I do not hesitate to offer as a reply, that those conditions are the subordination of the particular to the general, of the unit to the whole, of the individual to the republic. In a

word, sacrifice in its largest sense—that is, sacrifice of means to ends—is *the* condition of the existence of Art. The well-being of the community holds, in such a society, the highest place in the thoughts of lawgivers and law-guardians. To secure and maintain this well-being, the wish of the individual, the comfort of the family, the interest of any and of every class, must, if necessary, be disregarded. The State alone has privileges, or rather the one only privilege of universal and permanent precedence. The cravings of the atom for importance must be merged in the full development of the organism. As the fibres in a tree, as the cells in a flower, as the tissues in the members, as the drops in the ocean, the units of society must co-operate for the benefit of the social polity.'

'I understand your assertion, and individually might not be disinclined to recognize, though you have not so far argumentatively established, its truth.'

'True ; I have not. And, as you will readily see, I can do so only by availing myself of what logicians call the Joint Method of Agreement and

Difference. If I show that Art has thriven in periods which, differing in all other respects, resemble each other in the presence of this spirit of sacrifice, and has not thriven in periods which, again differing in all other respects, resemble each other in its absence, I shall have gone far at least towards as much absolute demonstration as the subject is capable of.'

'You would point, then, of course, to the Athenian and Florentine Republics?'

'Yes, I do. *They* will establish my theory—as far as any theory can be established by such a process—by virtue of the Method of Agreement. I suppose that I shall not be expected to prove what history sufficiently shows, that, differing as they did differ in almost every other possible condition—in locality, climate, race, religion, epoch—they had strikingly in common the circumstance of subordination of individual to public ends—in other words, the circumstance of the spirit of Sacrifice—and the phenomenon of abundant Art.'

'No; I shall not require you to prove either assertion, provided that you mean that the spirit of sacrifice was not voluntary, but compulsory, since

I know of no epochs in which individuals manifested more remarkable selfishness.'

'Of course the sacrifice was compulsory. The State compelled it; and the very struggling of individuals against it was evoked by the severe compulsion, and becomes more manifest in consequence. But this is quite in keeping with our first proposition, that the conditions exist rather in society than in the individual. Just as each age—as I said—probably produces an equal number of people capable, under favourable conditions, of becoming artists; so does each age probably produce the same number of individuals entirely self-seeking. Only some societies prevent, some endure, and some positively encourage, this self-seeking; just as some encourage, and others absolutely prevent, the existence of Artists.'

'Good. I accept the explanation, and indeed saw it beforehand. But now for the corroboration of your theory by the remaining process of the Joint Method of Agreement and Difference.'

'With pleasure,' said De Saintfront. 'We have already got two epochs abounding in Art, which have in common only one striking social circum-

stance, and that circumstance we have called the spirit, but had better call the principle, of sacrifice. We now want two epochs more or less barren of Art, which have nothing in common but the absence of the principle of sacrifice. Now I think I can bring two epochs more strikingly dissimilar in all but the absence of the principle of sacrifice, even than Athens and Florence were dissimilar in all but its presence; and they will both be found to be more or less barren of Art. Let us take the condition of Britain at the time of the Roman Conquest. There was scarce any social organization at all; the individual behaving himself on the whole pretty much as he liked, and following his own bent for the advancement of his own whims. Now, what is there in common between such a state and such a time, and the present condition of the United States of America? There are geographical, generic, secular, mechanical differences, the very greatest we can conceive. But they resemble each other in this. The social organization is slight and feeble; the individual scope is enormous. Everybody can do pretty much what he likes. The State has scarcely any control. Briefly

the principle of subordination of the unit to the whole, the principle of sacrifice, is absent. And in each case is there the same phenomenon, the entire absence of Art. Extremes have met with a vengeance. The extreme of what some people call civilization, and the extreme of what all people call barbarism, each deficient in the principle of individual subordination, *i.e.* of the principle of sacrifice, is each remarkable for being unable to produce Art, whilst two other epochs almost as opposed as they, but alike in being possessed of the principle, produced it in exquisite fertility. Do you follow and allow my argument?'

'I follow it perfectly, and allow that you have given to your theory a position of strong probability. More you would not perhaps exact from another, though you may be inclined to ascribe more to it yourself. Let it be conceded, then, that there appears to be a connection, an invariable connection if you like, between the existence of Art, and the existence of the public principle of sacrifice, and that this latter is the necessary social condition of Art. You maintain that this condition is absent from the present, and will be absent

from the remaining period of the nineteenth century ?’

‘I do. Let me begin with a confession. Too young to know anything about it, and yet quite as wise as a good many people much older, I hailed the advent of the French Revolution as the new gospel to mankind. It proclaimed many things. But we surely shall not wrong it if we say that it chiefly proclaimed the rights of the individual. Some people are beginning to affect that the French Revolution failed of its object. I cannot see the failure ; I see on every side the manifest signs of its almost complete success. The emancipation of the individual could scarcely be more entire. The Rights of Man have indeed been established. But then comes the melancholy part of my confession. I deplore the result. Established in his rights, emancipated to the full, to what has this liberated individual turned his attention ? To what but to the agreeable arrangement of himself ? He pursues the material, bows down to the pleasant, and defies the comfortable. He respects the policeman, but he laughs at the polity. The first protects, the second would trench upon his

hoard. He has rights, and blusters about them with the air of a supreme possessor. The State has no rights. It has only duties, the duties of protecting his rights. Mark you! I am not thinking of my own country particularly, nor of yours. Both are infected by the same disease. *Forms* of Government have very little to do with it. Athens and Florence were democratic, yet would not have the insolence of the individual; whilst America, also democratic, will have nothing else. My own country, with all its big prate, would accept a formal Despotism to-morrow, if the Despotism had but the wit to leave the individual materially free and comfortable, or—still better and quite possible—to make him yet more so. The principle of sacrifice is dead, and buried, too. Tell me—you who aspire to be an artist—as a fact, is Art in a very flourishing condition?’

‘I cannot pretend that it is. Still we surely have some Artists?’

‘No; we have not, if we are to adhere to your strict and highest signification of Art. We have only craftsmen. We have no Art, though we have plenty of artifice. We have not lost the trick;

possibly we have rather improved on it. But your pictures are little more than painting, and your poems little more than versification. They are painted and written for an Age which really wants nothing better, however much it may rave about High Art. It wants furniture, and it will pay ready money for it, and it is not wonderful that it gets it in perfection. The price for Art is Sacrifice ; and *that*, it will pay neither for Art nor for anything else. You want to be greater and better than your Age. It is impossible. You will fly from it, and isolate yourself on a high mountain. High mountains do not produce Artists ; for Artists are human after all, and the products of human influences. Yet descend into the city ! and you are lost. As well think to stand in the rain and not get wet ; as well think to meet the tide and not be moved by it ; as well think to sit in the sun and not to be warmed, as think to be a worker among furniture-seekers and not become a furniture-monger. If you produce at all, you will produce either what your Age wants, or a monstrosity which no Age could ever want.'

‘But do you mean to assert that the present Age does not want Art?’

‘Indeed I do, in the only fair sense in which want—*i.e.* earnest desire—can be applied to Art. The present Age earnestly desires to have splendid carriages and prancing horses, rare and well-kept vintages, huge mirrors, miles of lace, novel colours, exciting stories for its hours of *ennui*, gorgeous spectacles and soft dancing girls for its leisure, deft cooks, many courses, and a mild religion. It gets them all, as a matter of course; as every Age gets precisely what it wants. If Art can be superadded to all these, it will be very glad to have Art too. But it does not want Art before all these; only *after* them, if possible. It has quite made up its mind what master it prefers to serve, if the service of two be really impossible; which you may take your oath it for ever is.’

‘But more money is spent on Art than in any previous Age.’

‘*Mon Dieu!* how many important distinctions must I make in order fully to answer you! I might content myself with contradicting you, and pointing out that the Duomo and Campanile of Florence,

for instance, must have cost (in mere money) somebody or many somebodies—in point of fact the State—more than would go towards the establishment of some hundreds of so-called private collection of Modern pictures. But mere contradiction, though true, will not satisfy me. For though it be not a fact that more mere money is spent now-a-days on so-called Art than was formerly spent on real Art, I must guard myself against the possibility of its being concluded, from my answer, that the expenditure of money has any intrinsic connection with the creation of Art. Though Art, or rather the material and labour required for its production, must be paid for somehow, all the money in the world cannot produce one single stroke of Art, any more than it can produce the gurgle of a nightingale. And the State is just as powerless as the individual to evoke Art by financial patronage, when it has once permitted the unfettered licence of the individual to swamp the co-ordination of the whole. It, like the individual, can then bid only for craft, for artifice, for furniture. It may found Academies, distribute prizes, instigate competition as it will. True Art bears as much resemblance

to prize poems, or pictures of first merit, as a monarch of the forest does to a faultless park paling, or a wind-stirred group of water-reeds to an exquisitely finished cane-bottomed chair.'

Commencing the discussion in English, De Saint-front had long since wandered into the tongue which, as his own, gave him greater facility for fluency. Mortimer, though aware of the Frenchman's shrewdness and quiet cultivation of mind, had certainly never given him credit either for the logical dexterity or verbal copiousness to which the conversation of this afternoon entitled him. The language with which he had just concluded seemed to Mortimer at once so forcible and grotesque, that his first display of admiration was a good roar of laughter—an emotion which he had not experienced for many a long day.

'Bravo! I am sure you understand why I laugh. I laugh with you, not at you. If happy illustration could prove your point, it would indeed be demonstrated; though I do not mean to deny that you are somewhat dialectical as well as vehement.'

'I confess my peroration would almost excuse you if you forgot my argument. Ah! we rheto-

ricians—for I am one, if I am anything, though on a small scale—we rhetoricians rarely have justice done us by the calm formal thinkers. Argument lurks in our oratorical flights, and there is a method in our madness, though both require considerable patience for their discovery. The worst is, we almost always charge too far.’

‘But I am not going to take advantage of your rashness; and I will confess that you made a most strategic charge at my centre by your logical use of the Joint Method of Agreement and Difference.’

‘So far, so good, then. We both know that the very best use of it under the most favourable natural circumstances, cannot result in rigorous demonstration; but it may go very far towards it; and in this instance, we might easily call in aid, the ancillary Method of Concomitant Variations. I am sure that a careful study of history would show that in proportion as there has existed in place and epoch this public principle of sacrifice, in such proportion will Art be found to have thriven; where more of the first, more of the second; and where less, less.’

There was a temporary pause, of which, however,

Mortimer did not avail himself for any purpose but that of reflection. Shortly De Saintfront resumed :

‘ But I almost think I can fortify my position by a sound analogy. We are very great now-a-days at analysis : let us then avail ourselves of the only advantage left to us. A school both in literature and painting, is coming into vogue, if it have not already established itself, which assuming or labelled with the name of Pre-raphaelitism, prides itself upon its accuracy in detail, and its fidelity to a narrow meaning of the word Nature. That the writers of this school describe the furniture of a room or the phenomenal peculiarities of a locality with marvellous minuteness ; and that the painters of this school reproduce on canvas, silk hangings, chintz coverings, linings of nests, horses’ coats, brass-headed nails, ladies’ muffs, and petals of flowers, with exquisite skill, let us cheerfully concede. (By the way, it is a strange but significant coincidence that Science should at this very moment be pressing the sun into our service to do the very same thing for us. Photography is being discovered just at the very time when it seems to me that it is no longer wanted. Our so-called Artists are quite

as accurate as it is.) But to continue. What is this preponderance of detail, in painting or descriptive writing, but the very reverse of the principle of sacrifice, at work before the desk or the easel? Is it not the principle of sacrifice, the principle of subordinating the parts to the whole, flung to the winds, violated, laughed at, and practically denied? Is it not the opposite principle, the principle of individual assertion, the predominance of the separate units as units, erected in its stead? Triumphant in the larger arena of society, it would be wonderful if it did not triumph in the smaller arena of what you would call Art, but what I must be permitted to call Craft. All breadth has gone in your polity: it would be strange indeed if it were found in your pages or on your canvas.'

'And, supposing all this to be true,' asked Mortimer, 'what do you think of a society thus circumstanced?'

'That it is in a state of certain, and perhaps rapid, dissolution. Did we not know that it has once been organized and indeed still preserves considerable traces of lingering organization, we might suppose that it was in a state of formation, just as

Britain was when it presented the two very same phenomena, from which I chiefly argue to the dissolving state of modern society. Britain was commencing its social life ; ours is worn out.'

'I think not,' said Mortimer, quietly, 'though I will own myself unable at present to answer your arguments or to produce conflicting ones. I will think it out.'

'Think it out, by all means,' replied the other, 'but for God's sake do not *act* it out. I confess I should be quite satisfied to see you doing what I have of late years done, *viz.* nothing. Nineteenth-century moralists may prate as they like ; but contemplation is not an unworthy occupation for man. But I should not be satisfied to see you trying to do the wrong thing, the impossible thing. You are young and capable. If you cannot remain at rest, but must forsooth be up and doing, put your shoulder to a wheel that touches the ground, not to one that, isolated from the time and place, can but spin idly in the air. Do not attempt to solve the problem : Given the Nineteenth Century—To produce Art. It can but end in a *reductio ad absurdum*. All the cultivation in the world will not avail you. Upon

my faith, I think it will help to balk you. We know all about Art, of course ; *how* it was done, &c., &c. But though, Craft being inorganic, *its* dissection will therefore favour future construction, Art is organic, is a growth, is a vitality, just as much as is a tree, a bird, or a mammal ; and so, when you have made your triumphant analysis, you cannot reproduce what your analysis has destroyed. As I said, we are great in analysis. But your analyzed goose lays no more golden eggs.'

Again Mortimer laughed approvingly at the characteristic mixture of logic, illustration, and epigram, without the blending of which no true intelligent Frenchman can argue at all. Much as he enjoyed it, its continuance he allowed to be interrupted by the entrance of Marian, who had been present during most of the conversation, but who had left the room two or three minutes ago, and now returned in her bonnet.

'I am going to Saint-Etienne, papa.'

'Good, my child. You will not be long?'

'A little half-hour.'

'See ; I will go with you, Marian,' said Mortimer.

‘ Will you ? That is excellent. I am only going to the Stations of the Cross. There is nothing else.’

They were in the street.

‘ You are becoming quite a little papist.’

‘ Is there any harm ? ’

‘ None for you, that I know of.’

‘ I pray best there ; I mean, in the churches.’

‘ Probably. Do you still pray for *me* ? ’

She blushed rapidly and deeply.

‘ Yes, Mr. Dyneley ; always.’

‘ You are so good. Pray for me this evening.’

They passed under the open doorway. The procession of the Stations had commenced. They joined the journeying crowd, shifting with solemn prayers and sad chanting along the represented dolorous travel of the Cross to Calvary. Of all devotions, it is the most touching. But then, I have seen it under picturesque conditions ; by moonlight along the open corridor of the little chapel at Baveno, afrent the Islands of Lago Maggiore ; and by sundown, on Good Friday, among the stately ruins of the Colosseum in Rome. With these two occasions I always associate it ; but it is not to be despised at Caen.

Though certainly not a Roman Catholic, Marian actively joined in the Via Crucis, whilst Mortimer walked by her side. It is not a formal procession, but in its shapeless and shifting exterior resembles the crowd that attended the last scene of the Passion: with all the horrors omitted, and the tenderness alone supreme. Recalling the greatest and most fertile of all historic sorrows, how can it fail to comfort the afflicted and cheer the downcast of less heroic times? Moving along with it, hearing its plaintive impetrations, and smitten by its grief-suggested strains, if Mortimer did not envy, at least he sympathized with, those who knelt and prayed, and rose and wept, and walked and prayed and wept again, around the scenic stations of beneficent woe. At any rate, it was to him a significant sermon, intelligible if inarticulate, preached by the slow, sad shuffle of pilgrim feet, and the tremulous notes of the voices mostly of the poor. Who shall presume, despite their painful jars, to stand outside the limits of all religions, as long as there is one wide religion with the simple but universally applicable dogma—‘Take up thy cross and follow me!’ Unwise the man who, excessively reliant upon mental

or even moral means, extrudes sentimental means from the aids to life ! Mortimer had found in reliance upon Isabelle's stern decision, and in the work which followed it, swift advent of comparative consolation. But he would have been the last to deny, or so much as to doubt, that such scenes as this abetted his resignation when her decision seemed exorbitantly severe, or the flesh momentarily fainted under the laborious burden which the pitiless spirit imposed.

But additional assistance had come from a quarter whence he would never have thought of looking for it, and from which he was probably scarcely conscious as yet that it at all proceeded. Twice blest indeed is Mercy. From sheer compassion, from sudden consciousness that Marian was on the whole rather lonely, and that he in the selfishness of his own troubles had more than forgotten her, indeed had treated her with a neglect which he at once perceived amounted almost to brutality, Mortimer had taken pains somewhat to redeem her loneliness, had made an effort to be attentive to her, and had striven to be interested in her occupations. What was at first a conscious attempt, shortly became an

unconscious habit, and was now rapidly becoming a conscious pleasure. The bread cast upon the waters had soon come home. The patient was helping the physician, who could not cure himself. Marian was to him now at last a reality, a girl whom he knew, whom he went to see, was glad to find in-doors, and could positively miss. Fortune, like the mighty empire which worshipped her, wars only with the proud, and spares the subdued. A year ago, and who so low and lost as Mortimer? Like a sensible fellow, he lowered his colours which could no longer be held aloft, and lo! his life is again almost in battle array. Let the Past be as bad as bad could be, still it is not all over with a man of eight-and-twenty who is getting remuneration, however slight, for his toil, believes in and aims at an artistic, even if delusive, ideal, and can watch without yawning a young girl hard at prayer upon her delicate knees. *Ludum insolentem ludere pertinax*, is she, this same Fortune? Wait a little; your turn will come. *Transmutat incertos honores.*

Yet, perhaps, I have been a little over-hasty, and have attributed to Mercy a character in this instance not completely proven. *Was* Mortimer's

Mercy twice blest? That it benefited himself we have just seen; but did it really benefit Marian? I am not so sure of it. True, it banished from her mind all painful suspicion that she had merited his former unkindness. It assured her that she was not beneath his notice. And when it not only continued but increased, and he was not merciful alone but affectionate too, it advanced her regard for herself almost as much as for him. He still worked; but she could not say that work interfered with the regularity of his kindness. Together with all this, she had the comfort of hearing nothing more about another visit to England. Still she could only *hope* that it was abandoned; and the hope that is far from certain is, in some cases, anything but a pleasure. Hence though Marian's existence was enlarged by the introduction of Mortimer into its scheme, I question if it was quite so peacefully happy as when 'dear papa' was the only person she prayed for.

She had certainly prayed very hard during the Stations; and even when they were over, she kept Mortimer waiting by a further indulgence in some private prayers of her own. All minds are subject

to reaction, and Mortimer's was strikingly so. So it was not wonderful that, when they emerged from the cathedral, he who had been for the last twenty minutes exceedingly grave and meditative, should ask with a playful smile—

‘Well, Marian! and what did you ask for me to-day?’

Again she coloured—‘Nothing but what is for your happiness; or if it is not, of course I prayed that you might not get it.’

‘But what was it?’

‘You are too curious, Mr. Dyneley. You would not have me pray aloud?’

I know a lady who does. She is a most fashionable person, high-born, well-bred, satisfactorily married, receives *not* everybody, but is herself received everywhere, possesses fine houses, decorated footmen, tip-top horses, many carriages, but—has a large family, is exceedingly devout, and, as I say, prays aloud. I am out of the world, but the most charming *causeuse* of my acquaintance, who sometimes visits me in my solitude, swears to having heard the lady in question ejaculate in church the following prayer:—‘O Lord! send my Kitty a

husband, if it be Thy Holy Will ; and, dear Lord ! if it be Thy Holy Will, send him this season !' A most maternal prayer, say I. And I further say, that had poor Marian prayed aloud, I cannot help thinking, that she would have been overheard asking for Mortimer—and herself—a favour not altogether dissimilar.

Mortimer however did not overhear her requests to Heaven, and she would not be teased into telling him. They parted at her father's door, he turning homewards to spend the sober November evening in the less agreeable of the two kinds of literary labour into which we know his energies were divided. A second paper, so far resembling the one on Latium that, like it, it was founded on the experiences of Italian travel, had been dispatched to England nearly three weeks ago ; and he was beginning to expect the receipt of a letter, announcing its acceptance. Meanwhile, he was at work upon another. Did he prove as successful with one or two more essays as he had been in his first, he thought that he was not over-sanguine in imagining that he would then be able not only to get placed permanently on the list of contributors to the magazine, but to ob-

tain in consequence a connection with a periodical or two more. Oh, if he could ! And he stretched out his arms. Would he not go straight and swift to all-beloved Italy !

It was getting on fast to midnight. He had laid down his pen, without however moving from his desk, and was thinking. How small his life had grown ! Within what paltry limits did it seem to move ! Time was when, in that same Italy, he had sedately journeyed from pinnacled city to city, from classic slope to historic defile, from peak crowned with glorious monastery prodigal of soul-entrancing Art and mind-enlarging volumes, to piazza glistening with vital marble and centaur-spouted waters. He had held discourse with manly minds, driven by the very disfranchisement of their country to the dignified refuge of personal cultivation. He had sate, of intoxicating summer nights, within the radii of eyes bright as their stars, but infinitely more near. He had lived in an atmosphere of beauty, wit, elegance, and taste, quietly revelling in its very perils, but saved by a fastidious standard of life from its surrounding disasters.

And now !

Yet let him not be unjust. What, after all, *was* Life. Was not its measure the internal not the external existence? Could that be truly designated Life which at most was an elegant dream? If he were enamoured of days because they bore so striking a similarity to noiseless water under the shade of sun-flecked trees, was that ever a permanent picture? Beautiful it was, no doubt. But had not a river its breaks, its rapids, its weirs, its curves, its sweeps, and its deep dull silent sunless pools? If he really ever were to return to the land which had for him, as it has for every sensitive soul, a predominant fascination, was it well that he should return to it in the indolent mood with which he had sojourned in it of old? Was it even within the scope of his own schemes that he should do so? Surely not. If he resought its statue-peopled galleries, its ever-open libraries of varied wealth, its instructive cathedrals, and humanizing hills, his search would be not for the inactivity which now would necessarily be accompanied with unrest, but for guidance and encouragement in those artistic labours which alone could assure to him repose. But how had he *learned* to work at all? In place

and circumstance more severe than he would ever have been likely to find in a country where there is always physical sustenance for the asking, and mental luxury for the looking. The first steps in toil, even in the highest species of toil, are invariably irksome and distasteful; and he with his contemplative tendencies and habits, would never have taken them, save under conditions which made them almost compulsory. He had been able to take them here. They were over, and the successive steps were more agreeable far. What at first galled him as though it were a yoke, seemed now to buoy him up as though it had expanded into pinions. Might not Art—*his* Art—concern itself with the poetic treatment of some such moral metamorphosis, which would rival at least any of those which had made the Italian Ovid immortal? And then, off into a dream. Away: away. Until recalled by a loud and rapid knocking at his door accompanied with impatient pulling at the bell.

Jeannette must have gone to bed: it was so late. So he hurried off to answer the untimely summons himself. He opened. It was Marian.

‘Oh, Mr. Dyneley! Come with me, quickly : quickly. Papa is ill—is—is—perhaps dying.’

‘Yes : at once. I will get my hat. A moment.’

Jeannette now appeared, half-dressed and candle in hand.

‘Sit up for me, Jeannette. Monsieur De Saint-front is ill. I am going to him. Now, Marian! I am ready. Tell me : what is it?’

‘A fit of some sort. The doctor is with him.’

‘A fit! Come then, quickly. Take my hand!’

And at full stride, Marian half-running, he dragged her with him through the almost dark and wholly empty streets.

END OF VOL. II.

